OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | SINCLAIR | ... | MOBILE

YIE AR KUNG-FU

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO KONAMI'S INNOVATIVE BEAT-'EM-UP



ALSO INSIDE

WIZBALL | VIC-20 | TELEGAMES
GEOFF BROWN | BMX RACERS | OKAMI
BLUFFER'S GUIDE: FOOTBALL GAMES

N64 TOP 25

READERS & DEVELOPERS PICK THEIR FAVOURITES



"HE WAS JUST SOME CRAZY TAXI DRIVER!"

KENJI KANNO'S GAME BECOMES REALITY

CRAZY TAXI

AN EXCLUSIVE RIDE WITH GAME DIRECTOR KENJI KANNO
EVERY KEY GAME REVISITED ▪ THE BEST MINI-GAMES ▪ CRAZY TIPS



INSIDE THIS AWESOME ISSUE:

AMSTRAD CPC

LORD ALAN SUGAR ON BUYING SINCLAIR AND CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF THE CPC RANGE



THEME HOSPITAL

DISCOVER HOW BULLFROG REALISED THAT LAUGHTER REALLY IS THE BEST MEDICINE

ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
Digital Edition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 130

THE RETROBATES FAVOURITE FOOTBALL GAME



DARRAN JONES
FIFA 09 as it has the only good version of Ultimate Team, which channelled my love for collecting stickers into digital form.
Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine
Currently playing:
Batsugun
Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE
I have a soft spot for *FIFA 98*, largely because of the hilarious intentional fouls you could commit. Clattering into the keeper as he took a goal kick was always glorious.
Expertise:
Owning seven Master Systems
Currently playing:
Super Time Force
Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



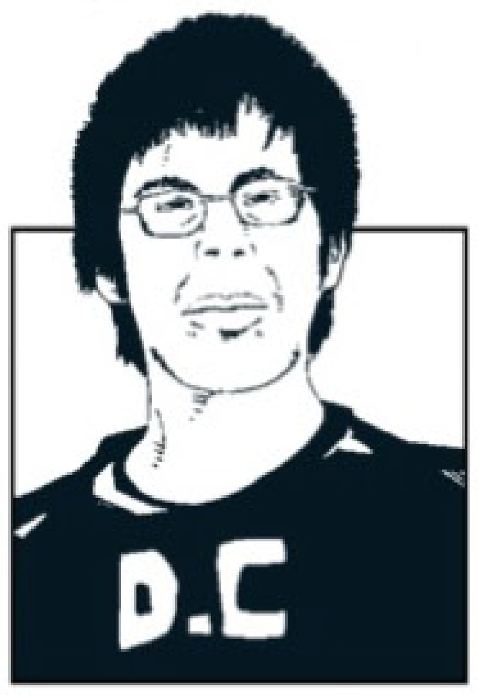
CRAIG GRANNELL
It's still got to be *SWOS*. Aside from the painstaking research regarding team information, it was the game that made an effort to feel like footie, even if it didn't much look like it.
Expertise:
Games that don't require 37 fingers to play
Currently playing:
Lots and lots of *Threes!*
Favourite game of all time:
HERO



STEVE HOLMES
International Superstar Soccer 64. I think *FIFA 98* was the better game, but the commentary in *ISS* was bloody preposterous, and for that it gets my vote.
Expertise:
Praising the Sun
Currently playing:
Dark Souls
Favourite game of all time:
The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time



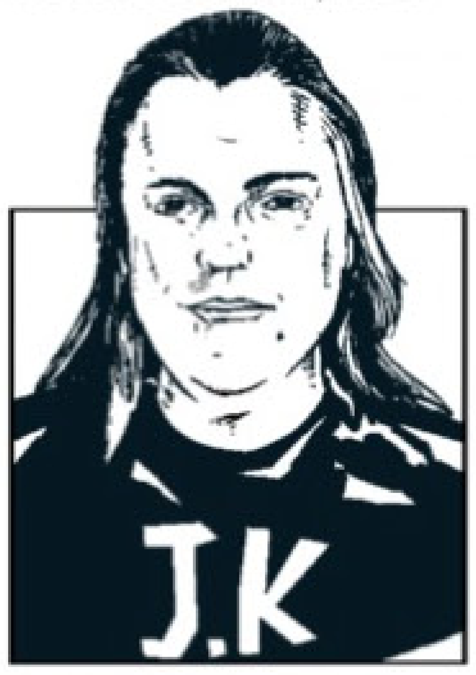
JONATHAN WELLS
Sensible World Of Soccer, great fun when I was younger, and I still remember a few old tricks to guarantee goals! BACK OF THE NET!!!
Expertise:
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads
Currently playing:
Watch Dogs
Favourite game of all time:
The Secret Of Monkey Island



DAVID CROOKES
You know that moment when Ronaldo scored in the Champions League final, flung his top off and just roared? That was me but with games of *Sensible Soccer*. I loved it.
Expertise:
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, *Dizzy* and PlayStation (but is that retro? Debate!)
Currently playing:
Grim Fandango
Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



PAUL DAVIES
Konami's *International Superstar Soccer* for SNES. I was never much into football games back then, but we all played this in the *NMS* office so I was kind of hooked.
Expertise:
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall
Currently playing:
Injustice: Gods Among Us
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts



JASON KELK
My favourite would have to be *Microprose Soccer*, and always with someone else to play against of course.
Expertise:
Being a homebrew hero
Currently playing:
Mission Monday (C64)
Favourite game of all time:
Io

LOADING...



I once had an argument with a colleague that the recent ports of *Crazy Taxi* were nowhere near as good as the original games because they didn't feature the correct music. He assured me that the music was nowhere near as important as the gameplay (which was still fine) and that I shouldn't worry about such a trivial thing. It's pleasing then to hear Kenji Kanno reveal in his exclusive interview that his over-the-top delivery game was based around that very music.

It's also pleasing to see a brilliant arcade series like *Crazy Taxi* on our cover. It may be 15 years young, but it successful exhibits the timeless arcade traits found in games that were many years older. There's an accessibility and immediacy to *Crazy Taxi* that still makes it a joy to play and it's great to see Sega still has faith enough in the IP to unleash it on a new generation of gamers.

Crazy Taxi is one of those franchises that can put a genuine smile across your face, and it's been a real pleasure to go over the development process of every game that Kenji Kanno has been involved with. Of course, there's plenty more great content in our latest issue, but I'll let you go off and discover it for yourselves.

The Dreamcast is calling me for one more game…



retro GAMER

GAMING ICON

Is Shigeru Miyamoto gaming's greatest icon?

With the new generation now in full swing we felt it was the perfect time to celebrate some of gaming's biggest icons for an exciting upcoming feature.

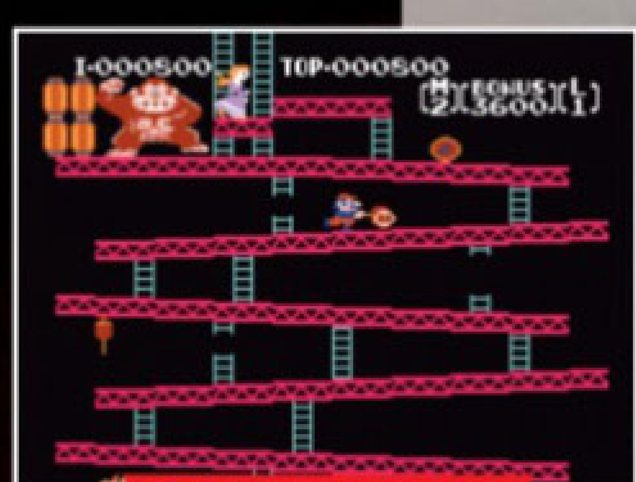
Help **Retro Gamer** find the many important individuals who have turned our favourite pastime into one of the world's biggest forms of entertainment, so that we can give them the recognition they deserve in a future issue. Whether you believe it was Shigeru Miyamoto who refreshed the gaming landscape, or that Nolan Bushnell heralded the start of the industry as we know it, we'd love to have your input. As always the best suggestions will appear in the magazine, so take this chance to join in the celebrations and have your say.

You can tell us about your favourite industry veterans on the **Retro Gamer** forum, our Facebook page, or even via Twitter using **#videogameicons**.

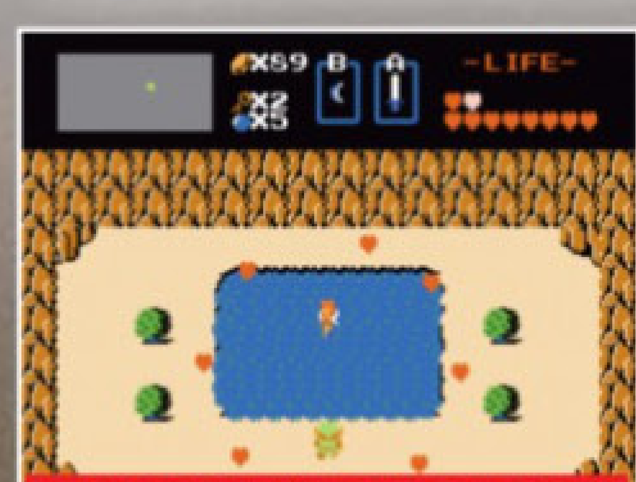
We look forward to your suggestions…



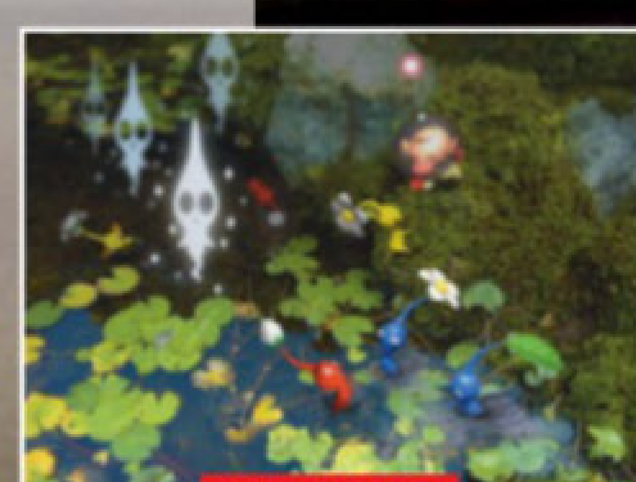
MARIO



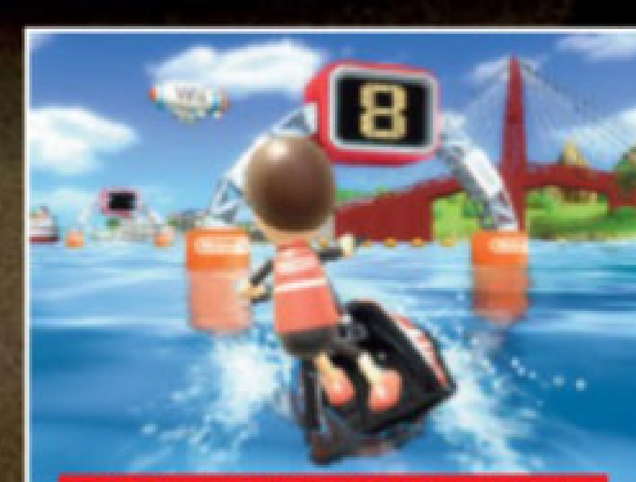
DONKEY KONG



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA



PIKMIN 3



Wii SPORTS RESORT

What's your favourite Shingeru Miyamoto game? Let us know >>>



“Videogames are bad for you? That’s what they said about rock and roll”

Shingeru Miyamoto

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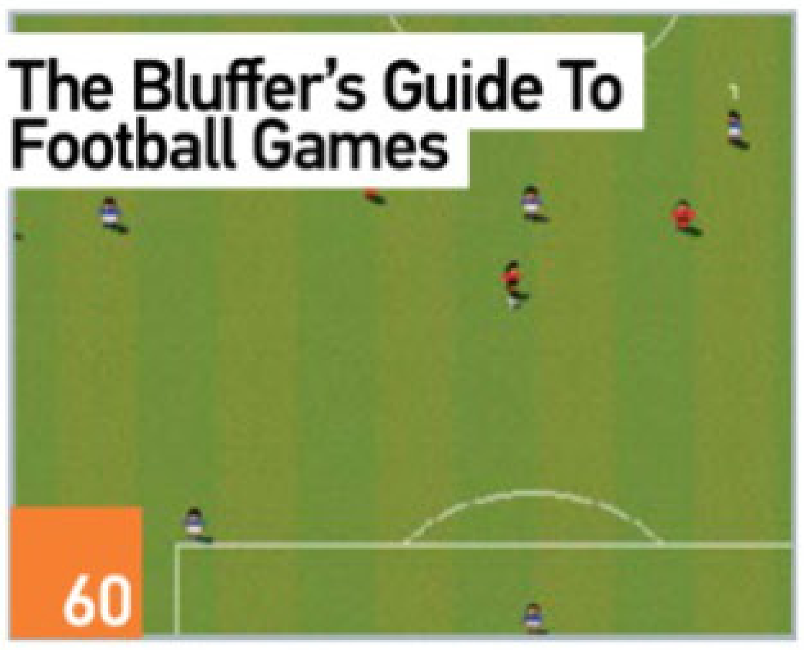


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> **"Clover managed to push players towards a more creative and experimental approach"**
> Luke Albigés





REVIEWS



ESSENTIALS



retro radar

GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



>> Our main news this month concerns an interesting new art project that melds the classic arcade games of yesteryear to futuristic landscapes. Next month we'll have all the big news from E3

CONTENTS

STRANGE NEW WORLDS

DANNY PASSARELLA DISCUSSES HIS ARCADE-BASED ART EXHIBITION



» We just want to get on the back of that bike and ride off somewhere.



» Danny created Passarella Death Squid ten years ago. Fantasy Scenes is a new side project for him.



The 'are videogames art?' discussion has raged for just about as long as there have been videogames. From the simple elegance of *Pong*, to the ridiculously detailed environments of *Skyrim*, it's easy to see why so many gamers openly discuss the subject with their peers. The incoming Kickstarter project Artcade is filled with stunning artwork from some of the greatest arcade games of all time, while Video Games Live is a yearly event that celebrates the industry by recreating classic videogame soundtracks with live orchestrated music. Now though we're going to see videogames expressed through another medium.

Danny Passarella is best known for Passarella Death Squad, a project he first set up in 2004. He originally focused on distinctive clothing, with his styles appearing in some of the world's top fashion shops. Music followed in 2007, with his tracks featuring on the playlists of top DJs. Now though, Danny is working on a brand new project, one that's very personal to him. "My first computer was a ZX Spectrum," he tells us. "I actually can't remember what games I played outside of *Monty On The Run*, as most of my time growing up playing games was really spent around the arcades."

This obsession with the arcades of yesteryear is the focus of Danny's first art exhibit, which will feature at The Gallery at Forge & Co. It's an alluring looking project that will see videogames and science fiction collide in spectacular fashion, and is something close to Danny's heart. "I wanted to create a series of artworks that reminded me of how it was growing up in Whitley Bay, which is a seaside resort near Newcastle," explains Danny when we ask him about the inspiration behind his new project. "Whitley Bay isn't the place it used to be. Like many British Victoria seaside resorts, they have suffered over the decades and the arcades are now gone. For me personally I felt these machines were a good representation of that era, but I also found that other people also held these machines in a similar regard, a representation of their youth, a time they hold dear."

Many classic arcade games were custom built, designed to draw gamers and coins to them like moths to a flame. There's an epic feel to those pre-JAMMA coin-ops that Danny's distinctive images have easily captured. *Gauntlet*, *OutRun*, *After Burner* and *Rolling Thunder* are just a few of the ten games featured, and each one is typically set against fantastic futuristic backdrops.


» Danny has worked hard with arcade owners around the world to create some stunning imagery.

> **"My main inspiration really comes from the artists of the genre"**
> Danny Passarella

"I wanted to make sure I used machines that people who weren't arcade game fans might recognise, so less well-known games ended up being left out, even though they may have meant more to me personally," explains Danny. "They also had to have the beautiful cabinet artwork that made these games so special." Special they may be, but the tracking down of the specific cabinets was a far trickier task than Danny first imagined. In fact it proved to be a gigantic logistical nightmare, especially when it came to finding machines that had been well looked after. "Finding the ten machines took over two years," Danny tells us, making the end result even more impressive. "I sent out around 500 emails, plus checked forums and websites. Once I'd found them I had to make sure they were in good condition and owned by people who [were] willing to help and get involved."

While the cabinets are worth a fortune, the project cost mainly time as Danny didn't need to buy any machines, instead getting permission from owners. "In each case I was able to work with the owners of the machines and direct them to take a picture in the position I needed to fit in with the background," Danny told us. After sourcing the required cabinet images, they were added to the augmented shots of Danny's hometown, Whitley Bay.

One of Danny's missions was to give each cabinet a monolithic feel, whilst highlighting the connections to a lost past – the new commercialised Whitley Bay is a world away from the quaint seaside town that Danny used to breakdance in as a kid. Danny was also keen to highlight his love of science fiction, with much of the inspiration coming from a single auteur. "For me Stanley Kubrick's *2001* is the best," he tells us. The 'Fantasy Scene' artworks concept is based upon the monolith, and how the arcade machines have arrived and transformed the environments.

"My main inspiration really comes from the artists of the genre in general, their visions of the future, their interpretations of what lies out there, and how our imagination runs wild." It's a goal he's easily accomplished. The *Hang On* bike featured in Fantasy Scene Number 1 is easily Danny's favourite, telling us: "Once it came together I felt then I had enough confidence to go forward and complete the collection."

We're glad he continued, as the end result is something special. The collection comprises of a stunning set of images, some of which will be available to by in the form of digital pigment prints. The Fantasy Scenes exhibition runs from 25 July to 3 August is open daily from 11 am – 7pm with free admission. A private viewing between 6.30 and 9.30 pm will be available on 24 July. "I really hope people come and enjoy the artwork, remind themselves not just of the machines but also of a time when, in order to entertain yourself, you had to get up and about and find what you wanted," he tells us. "To create games it takes imagination, ambition and talent, it's no different from anything else we consider art." *


» Danny hopes that the iconic cabinets will appeal to everyone, not just gamers.


» The juxtaposition of cabinets against real-world environments is extremely well handled.

TO BE THIS GOOD TAKES SEGA

» The Sega classics reinvented by Danny

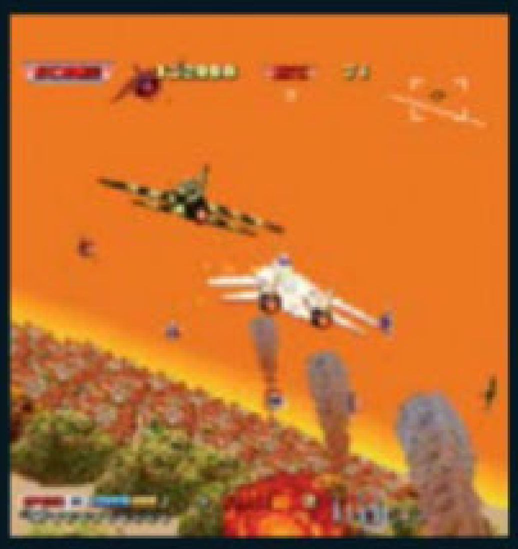
HANG ON

■ Yu Suzuki's arcade games always managed to combine cutting-edge technology with finely honed gameplay. *Hang On*, despite being nearly 30 years old remains an utterly thrilling racer. The Super Scaler technology holds up amazingly well, while the cabinet design still looks stunning. Little wonder it takes pride of place in Danny's new collection. We want to take it for a spin right now.



AFTER BURNER

■ Another Sega classic and another that has the talent of Yu Suzuki etched all over it. Riffing off of *Top Gun*, *After Burner* lets you play as a top pilot, shooting down planes and pulling off barrel rolls as you chase those high scores. It's a gut-churningly fast game that's accompanied by a fantastic soundtrack.



OUTRUN

■ We'd have preferred the original hydraulic sit-down cabinet, but the upright version of *OutRun* is still a thing of beauty and has been perfectly captured by Danny in his work. Once again created by Yu Suzuki, it's arguably one of the most famous Sega games of the Eighties, perfectly summing up its blue skies philosophy and delivering plenty of high-speed thrills in the process.



THE VAULT

THE COOL RETRO STUFF THAT WE'VE HAD OUR EYE ON THIS MONTH

PICK OF THE MONTH



Ink Whiskey Hip Flasks

They may look like ordinary NES cartridges, but as fun as they sound, Drunk Hunt, CastleVodka, and Metal Beer aren't classic 8-bit games believe it or not. These Kickstarter-funded slabs of plastic are in fact excellent retro hip flasks, disguised as classic software for Nintendo's extraordinarily successful console.

In fact, they're so well-disguised that the location of the opening might not be immediately obvious. The secret is in the tab at the top, where you'd normally grip the cartridge to remove it from the system, which now functions as a removable plug to keep the drink in. We're rather taken with these!

Price: £12.99
From: www.funstock.co.uk

WIN THESE!

Turn to page 108-109 for your chance to win this great prize

Bubble Bobble Mug

Excellent though they are, hip flasks aren't universally appropriate drinking vessels – sometimes you need something suitable for the office, especially if your manager is already prone to mistaking 7-Up cans for Carlsberg. You scoff, but this actually happened to Nick in his pre-**Retro Gamer** days. This *Bubble Bobble* mug avoids any mistaken alcohol identification, and displays your love for Taito's single-screen platformer too.

Price: £7.99
From: www.1up2p.com



Pac-Man Headphones

One of the most iconic things about *Pac-Man* is the game's audio. The "wakka wakka" of dot-munching, the jingle at the beginning of the stage and even Pac-Man's deaths are accompanied by sounds that refuse to dislodge themselves from your memory. So why not experience them while wearing *Pac-Man* headphones? Head onto the train with these and a Neo Geo Pocket Color, and inspire envy.

Price: £19.99
From: www.gamerabilia.co.uk



Sega Arcade Gamer Portable

The Master System and Game Gear don't get nearly as much love as the Mega Drive from retro hardware manufacturers, so this battery-operated handheld is always welcome. It comes loaded with 30 games including *Sonic Chaos, Alex Kidd In Miracle World, Fantasy Zone, Ristar, Columns, Quartet* and *Golden Axe*. Best of all, it even includes the Master System's hidden *Snail Maze* game!

Price: £27.99
From: www.funstock.co.uk





Tanooki Mario Plush

For all of Mario's fantastic games, we get the impression that he might not be the most pleasant character to cuddle up to. He almost always wears the overalls associated with his professional life – a smelly life of unblocking pipes. No thanks. But when you change his clothes and put him in a raccoon suit, he becomes a rather more huggable type of chap. Hooray!

Price: £15.99
From: www.amazon.co.uk

Retro Gamer Coasters

Erase annoying drink rings and get a blast of nostalgia at the same time with our awesome coasters. Available in packs of four, these tough durable coasters feature some of the best **Retro Gamer** covers we've ever produced, making them perfect for your loved ones.

Price: £4.99
From: **www.imagineshop.co.uk**




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retrocolumns

>> PAUL DAVIES GIVES HIS VIEWS ON THE RETRO WORLD

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.





Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years

The Shopkeeper

Don't know about you, but I used to love watching *Mr Ben* on kids' TV – a bowler-hat bloke who was transported to magical worlds whenever he stepped through the door of a fancy dress shop. The key ingredient, mind you, was always The Shopkeeper.

This month I want to say thank you to anyone that ever sold me a videogame, from as far back as *Puck Monster* in WHSmith, Rochdale. You may not always have known what you were dealing with, or you may have known this only too well and hiked the prices up. But, I thank you all the same, from the very bottom of my plastic Master Chief piggy bank (also thanks to whoever sold me this).

Videogame shopkeepers, then! Unlike supermarkets and a lot of car showrooms, your average gaming vendor needs to know just that little bit more than you. Or, at least, convince his customer that this may be the case. For example, in 1991, the bloke from Microbyte in Manchester Arndale had been to America for CES and seen *Sonic The Hedgehog* in action. He didn't seem all that excited, but I was convinced this was because he had been privy to even more dark secrets. Or maybe he was mildly terrified by my stream of consciousness interrogation technique at the time.

Fast forward a few more years and the staff of Bournemouth's Videogame Centre helped me scour the earth in search of bright pink Famicom *Kirby* carts and isometric JRPGs. They'd collapse the cardboard boxes of Super Famicom imports for me, knowing I'd have a fit if they arrived squashed. Once, I rushed to Heathrow airport to collect *Power Stone* for Dreamcast (I think it was), fresh off the plane from my main contact who was waiting in the customs car park. To this day, you'll note these options are still not available to Amazon customers.

As I stand in queue, as I still prefer to do, at branches of our most famous high street gaming outlet, I remain humbled too by the perseverance of staff dealing with my fellow caffeinated customers. I adore the fact that I can have the most obsessively compulsive conversation with store managers on a quiet day (lately: should I actually use this limited edition controller for which I've paid to own?). Your friends and family may never understand you, but the guys behind the counter always have.

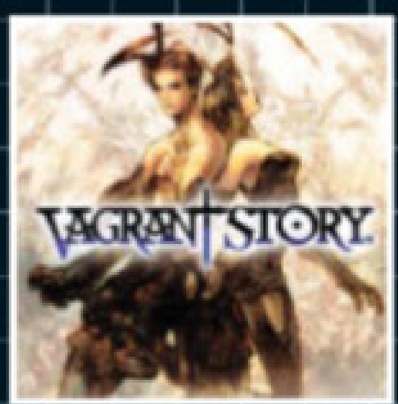
I was prompted to write this after being bombarded by Twitter pics of Replay Events' recent Play Blackpool. Folks sharing photos of their hordes and the storefronts from which they were purloined (now there's a word I haven't used since 1995!). So, let's take time out to give respect to anyone that ever set their stall out to serve gamers; from car boots to flagship city stores. When everything is reduced to packets of digital content at the end of download queues, it'll be down to us to pass on the memories. Oh boy, this is really, really sad.

Still, there are the retro events keeping alive what I see as being crucial human interaction: enthusiasts serving a choice selection of intoxicating experiences comprising plastic and PCB. The further we travel into the future, the more retrobilia gets added to that list. *

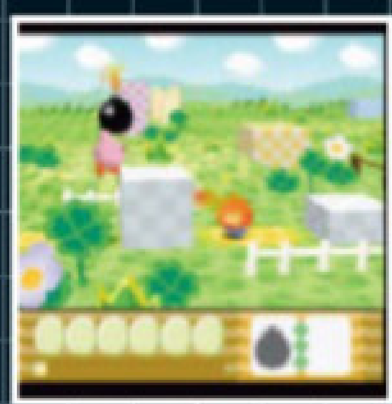
19 June – 17 July

retrodiary

>> A month of retro events both past and present



21 June 2000
■ Square's brilliant role-playing action game *Vagrant Story* is released on the PlayStation in Europe.



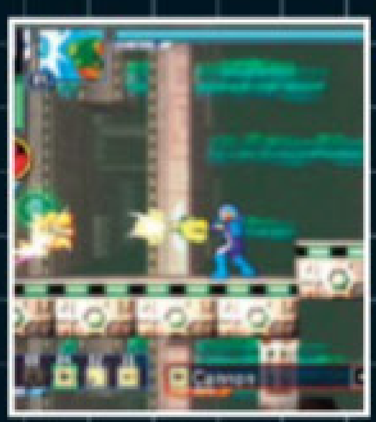
22 June 2001
■ *Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards* is released on the N64 across Europe.



22 June 2001
■ THQ's *Evil Dead: Hail To The King* is released on Dreamcast and PS2 in Europe.

23 June 2000
■ Want to see Ryu take on the Hulk? Now you can with *Marvel Vs Capcom: Clash Of Superheroes*, released on the Dreamcast.

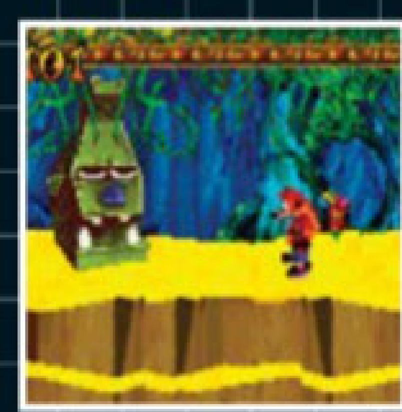




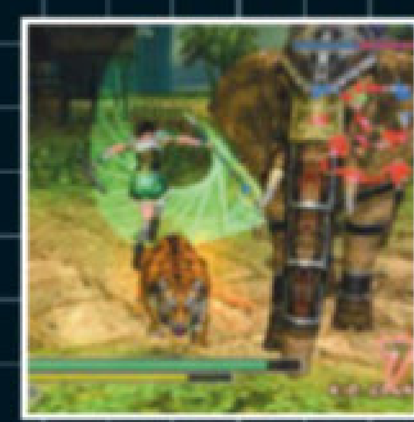
27 June 2003
■ Capcom releases the PAL version of *Mega Man Network Transmission* on the GameCube.



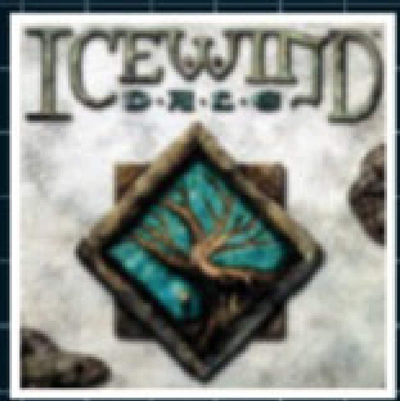
26 June 1997
■ Published by Electronic Arts and developed by Bullfrog, *Dungeon Master* is released on PC.



25 June 2004
■ *Crash Bandicoot Fusion* and *Spyro Fusion*, two platform games from Vivendi, are released on the Game Boy Advance.



24 June 2005
■ The UK release of the hack-and-slash game *Dynasty Warriors 5* appears on the PlayStation 2.



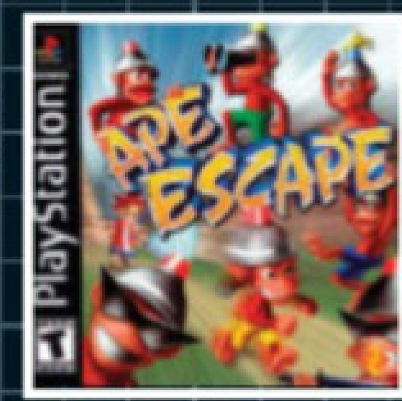
29 June 2000
■ *Icewind Dale*, the *Dungeons & Dragons*-based role-playing game, is released on PC and Mac.



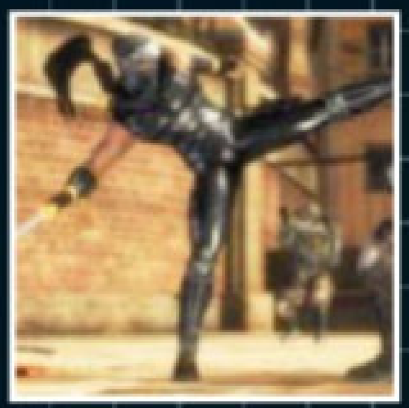
29 June 2000
■ Dreamcast owners get to hone their skateboarding skills with Activision's *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater.*



30 June 2006
■ Codemasters releases its last game in the *Micro Machines* series, *Micro Machines V4*, on the PlayStation 2.



2 July 1999
■ Sony releases its new platform game, *Ape Escape*, on the PlayStation.



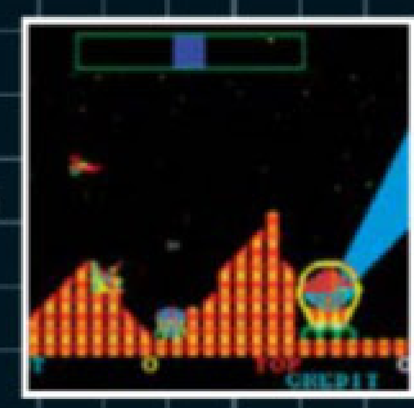
6 July 2007
■ The European release of *Ninja Gaiden Sigma* arrives on the PlayStation 3.



5 July 1996
■ SNK's *Metal Slug* is released on the Neo Geo CD console in the US and Japan.



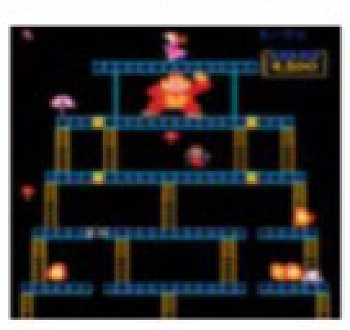
4 July 2003
■ *Tomb Raider: The Angel Of Darkness* is released on PlayStation 2 in the UK.



3 July 1981
■ Universal releases its new horizontal side-scrolling space-themed shooter *Cosmic Avenger* into arcades.



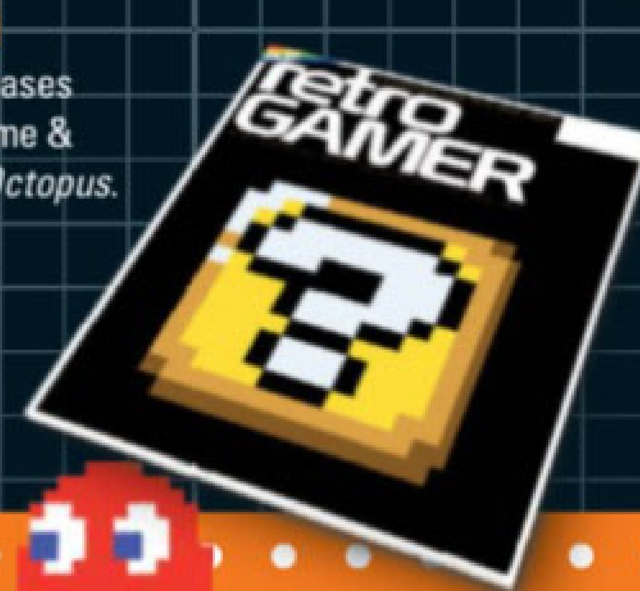
7 July 1993
■ Fancy a *Samurai Shodown*? SNK did, releasing the fighting game into arcades this very day.



9 July 1981
■ Nintendo unleashes *Donkey Kong* into arcades across Japan. Can the intrepid Jumpman save Lady?



16 July 1981
■ Nintendo releases its handheld Game & Watch classic *Octopus*.



17 July 2014
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

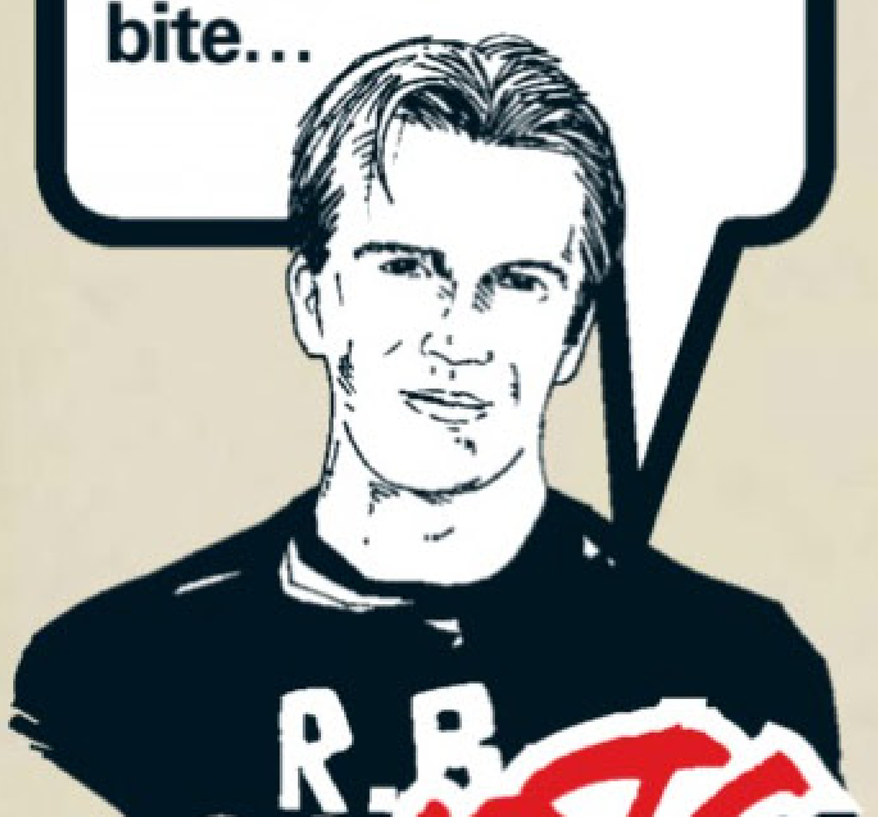


Photo courtesy of Paul Drury

» Regular contributor Paul Drury has a personalised *Super Simon* signed by Ralph Baer.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPTEMBER 1980

SEPTEMBER 1980 – Wizards are at Wor, Magical Spot II not so magical, Speak & Maths adds up, Simon becomes Super while Activision's Fishing Derby casts away. Richard Burton is waiting for a bite…



Taito unwrapped its latest coin-op this month, which saw you battling through monster-infested dungeon mazes in *Wizard Of Wor.*

Taito unwrapped its latest coin-op this month, which saw you battling through monster-infested dungeon mazes in *Wizard Of Wor.*

Wizard Of Wor was a top-down, single-screen game that could be played by one player or as a simultaneous two-player affair. Whether you chose to be cooperative or combative with your fellow arcade player wasn't that important as the aim of the game was essentially to rack up as big a score as possible while killing off the dungeon's resident monsters. However, some have the ability to render themselves invisible although they can still be pinpointed thanks to the radar at the bottom of the screen. Each dungeon is one screen viewed top-down.

Wizard Of Wor proved to be a very popular game, so much so that it was ported across to several systems including the Atari 2600, Commodore 64 and also the Bally Astrocade, although it was renamed *The Incredible Wizard.*

Universal's arcade release his month was somewhat controversial. *Magical Spot II* was a fairly run-of-the-mill fixed shoot-'em-up with some cutesy yet chunkily crafted graphics. The aliens were scorpion-like creatures while an oversized spaceship continually dropped baby creatures that grew almost immediately into fully-fledged adult spaceship-hunting nasties.



» [Atari 2600] David Crane's *Fishing Derby* was a fine example of gameplay and originality.

So why the controversy? While *Magical Spot II* wasn't anything to shout about in terms of gameplay or graphics, it begged the question, why was such a mediocre game afforded a sequel? What confused many a gamer and games commentator alike was that the original *Magical Spot*, which has only been released at the beginning of the year, was identical in every way shape and form bar a few colour changes. It was an odd decision on Universal's part as neither game did very well commercially.

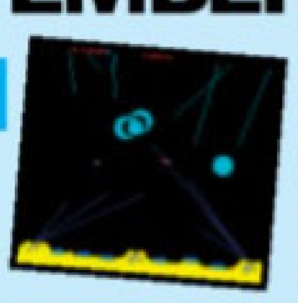
Taito released a top-down racing game, *Speed Race GP-5*, which followed the fine tradition of similar racing games released by the company. The original *Speed Race* was released in 1974 and played very well with a number of similar games released in the following years.

Speed Race GP-5 was more of the same. The game consisted of a fast-paced race along congested roads lined with greenery in a battle against the clock to reach the checkpoint in time.

CHARTS

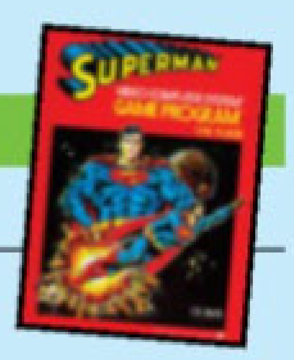
SEPTEMBER 1980

ARCADE



1. Missile Command (Atari)
2. Asteroids (Atari)
3. Galaxian (Midway)
4. Space Invaders Part II (Midway)
5. Space Invaders (Midway)

ATARI 2600



1. Superman (Atari)
2. Championship Soccer (Atari)
3. Canyon Bomber (Atari)
4. Circus Atari (Atari)
5. Sky Diver (Atari)

TANDY TRS-80



1. Temple Of Apshai (AS)
2. Adventure (Microsoft)
3. Datestones Of Ryn (AS)
4. Star Trek (Adventure International)
5. Android Nim (SoftSide)

MUSIC



1. Feels Like I'm In Love (Kelly Marie)
2. One Day I'll Fly Away (Randy Crawford)
3. Don't Stand So Close To Me (Police)
4. Masterblaster – (Stevie Wonder)
5. It's Only Love/Beyond The Reef (Elvis Presley)

SEPTEMBER WORLD NEWS

10 September saw the world premiere of the film *The Exterminator.* The classic vigilante film saw John Eastland (Robert Ginty) transform into an ultra-violent vigilante killer when his best friend is attacked and later killed. Eastland decides to dish out his own form of retribution on the gangs and criminals of New York by cleaning up the streets as The Exterminator.

11 September saw two Chicago gangsters rob a diamond merchant in London in an armed robbery lasting one minute. They took over £1.5 million worth of diamonds including the 26-carat Marlborough Diamond. They were apprehended on their arrival in Chicago although the Marlborough Diamond was never recovered…

22 September saw the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War. It started when Iraq invaded Iran by land and air after the ongoing border disputes boiled over. The conflict ran for almost eight years, ending with a UN ceasefire.

25 September saw the death of John Bonham, drummer with the rock band Led Zeppelin, who died at the age of 32. After a particularly heavy drinking session, Bonham was put to bed and died in his sleep.

There was another varied and eclectic selection of album releases this month. Highlights included *Scary Monsters And Super Creeps* (David Bowie), *Blizzard Of Ozz* (Ozzy Osbourne) and *Absolutely* (Madness).

THIS MONTH IN…

80 MICROCOMPUTING

The US computer magazine took a look at how the TRS-80 was selling in Europe. It was pleasantly surprised to find it in various countries across the continent including Holland and Belgium, where it found one retailer in a Belgian town who claimed to have sold one or two TRS-80s a month since launch. Hotcakes I tell you…



COMPUTE!

Among the pages of coding was an article on Quality Software's new releases for the Apple II. Featured were *Battleship Commander* and a game with the obvious title of *Asteroids In Space.* Both looked like type-ins. Was Quality Software keen on irony?



BYTE

In what must've been a slow month for games, of which coverage was virtually zero, *Byte* decided to dedicate five pages to dissecting a Texas Instruments Speak & Spell just to see how it worked. Hundreds of words of tech speak later and the article concluded, sadly without a conclusion or point.

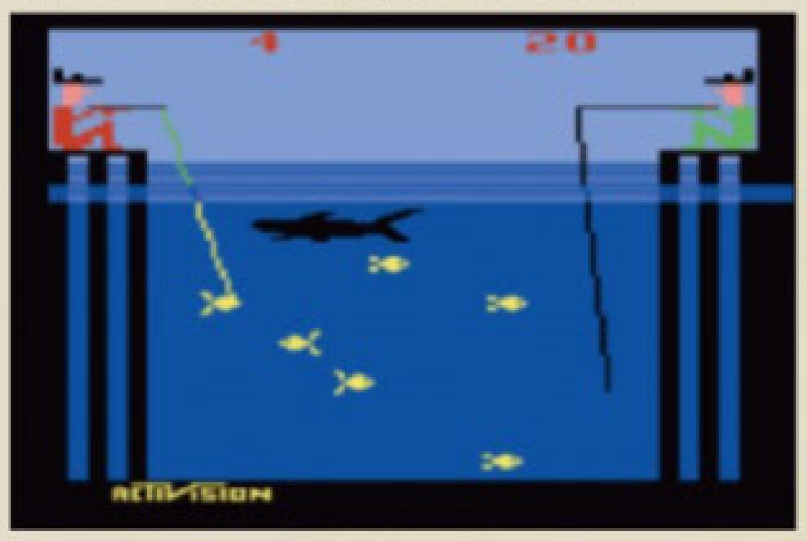


It played very smoothly although the steering wheel controls were very sensitive, making overtaking at speed a twitchy manoeuvre. The speed of the game, the reassuring sounds of the engine and gear changes all contributed to make *Speed Race GP-5* another successful coin-op driving game success for Taito.

Nichibutsu gallantly attempted to take the *Star Trek* franchise and create an arcade shoot-'em-up. The aim of the game was to defend your space station by blasting everything that moved using the scope and laser cannon. It was complete and utter pap.

An already busy Taito unveiled two space-based shoot-'em-ups in the form of *Astro Zone* and *Space Cyclone.* Both were generic, dull and not worth the floor space upon which they sat.

Away from the jingle of coinage and smelly arcades was Texas Instruments' latest release in its educational electronic games family, Speak & Math. It maintained the much-loved shape of the Speak & Spell changing only the input keys and colour scheme. Although it contained no calculator function, it did have five different games; *Solve It, Number Stumper, Great Than/Less Than, Word Problems* and *Write It.* The memory was also expandable via an expansion slot.



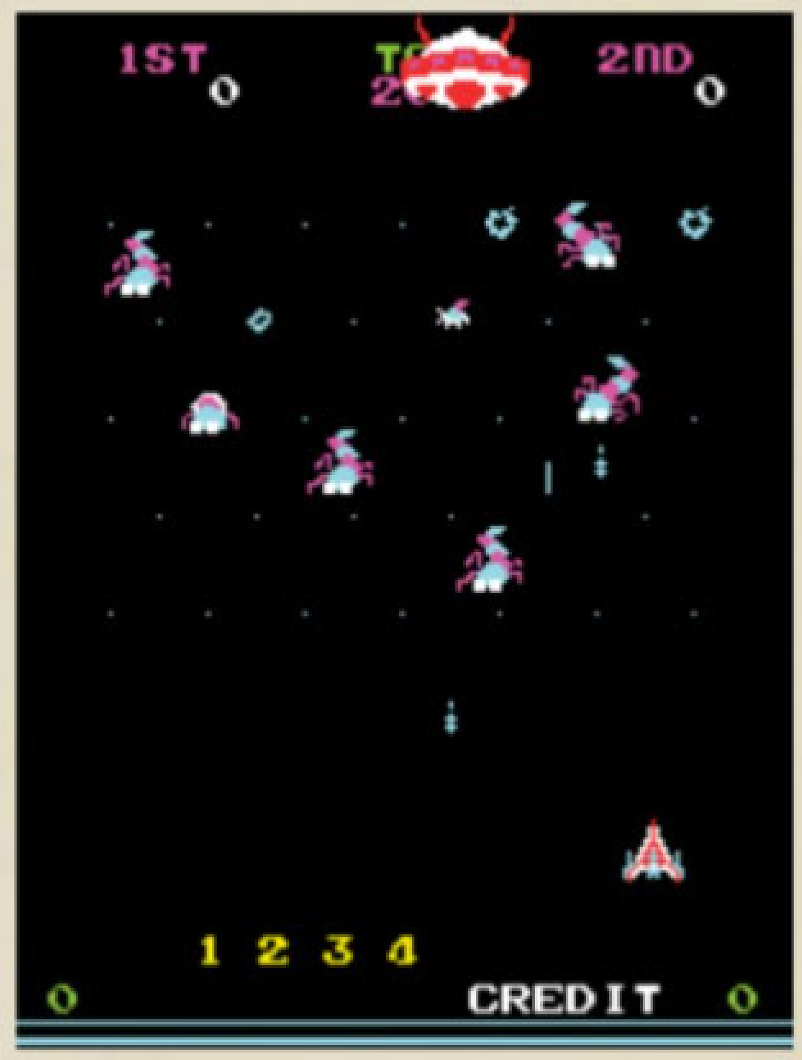
» [Atari 2600] We love how the fishermans' rods look like rifles. Fishing is about to get deadly serious…

While it didn't take off like the Speak & Spell did, the Speak & Math was a worthy addition to Texas Instruments' electronic learning catalogue. The third and final title in the series was Speak & Read, which was just a few short weeks away from release.

Atari 2600 owners who were tired of the usual regurgitated gaming fodder masquerading as space-themed shoot-'em-ups had an interesting title added to its games list with the release of Activision's *Fishing Derby.*

If you owned an Atari 2600 and were hankering for your fingers to smell of fish, you were in luck… Designed by David Crane was *Fishing Derby,* an ingenious simultaneous two-player game. Pitting two fishermen against each other, the aim of the game was to reel in 99lbs of fish. Those swimming near the surface weighed less than those near the seabed and therefore required less work to reel in.

While the gameplay sounds relatively simple bordering on potentially relaxing there is one element that makes reeling in your catch a little more testing. There's a great big shark that swims across the top half of the screen waiting to snaffle any fish that strays too close.



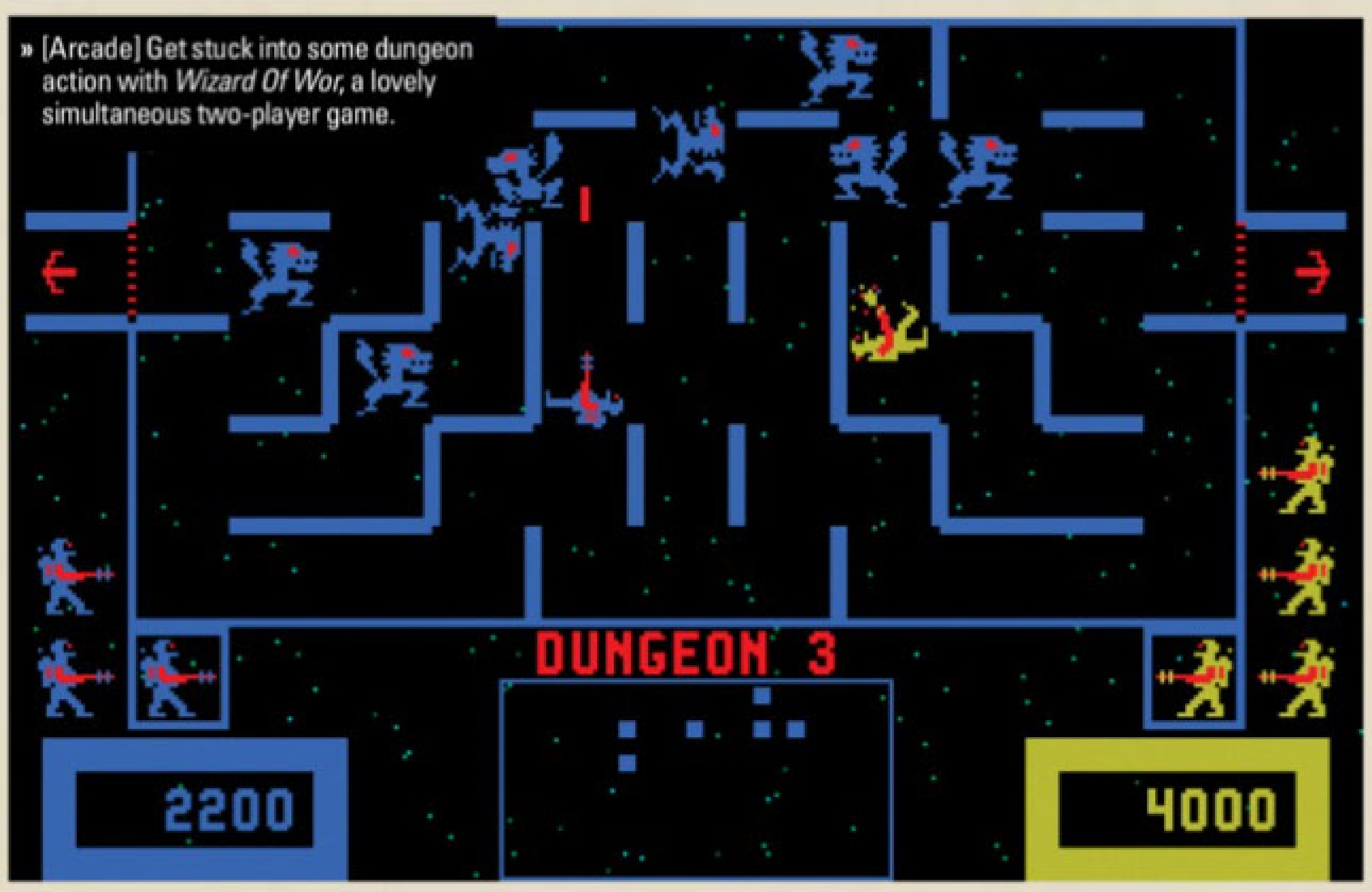
» [Arcade] *Magical Spot II* wasn't the best shooter, yet was a sequel that was identical in almost every way.

The shark is big, the playing area is small and your timing better be bang on if you want to score big.

Graphically *Fishing Derby* was fine, with good use of colour, but the gameplay is where *Fishing Derby* won with its simple and refreshingly different approach to gaming. While the game didn't possess the pulling power of an arcade coin-op conversion, it was arguably one of the most playable Atari 2600 titles, being a typically slick Activision effort.

Electronic tabletop gaming additions this month included *Galaxian* by Bandai from its Electronic Arcade range and two new variants of the massively popular sound-matching memory game *Simon* by MB Games. *Pocket Simon* was a smaller version of the original while a bigger two-player version called *Super Simon* dispensed with the classic circular design, preferring a rectangular head-to-head keyboard-style layout.

Pocket Simon sold well thanks to its size and price but *Super Simon* struggled to find an audience despite the popularity of the original. Maybe that was the sticking point, every family had the original already…

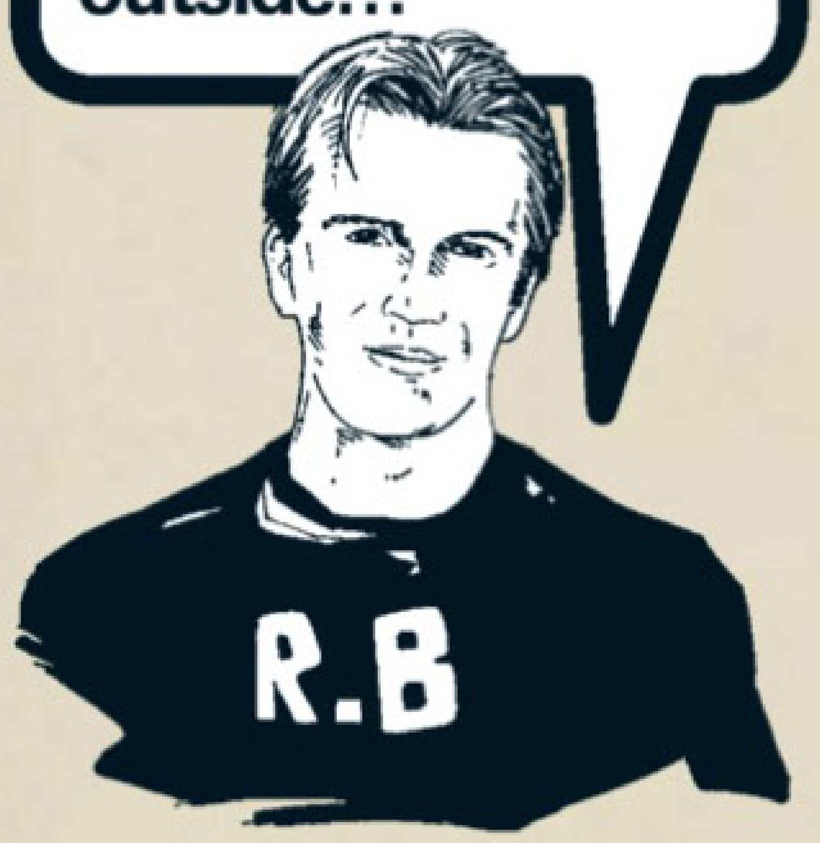


» [Arcade] Get stuck into some dungeon action with *Wizard Of Wor,* a lovely simultaneous two-player game.

BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1997

MAY 1997 – Sol Divide arrives, Vampire Savior bites back, Pitfall Harry returns, Riven more hit then Myst, Theme Hospital born on time and Armadillo Racing rolls in. Richard Burton is not soft on the inside and crunchy on the outside…



Relatively unknown developer Psiyko released its medieval-themed 2D side-scrolling shooter *Sol Divide – Sword Of Darkness* into arcades this month. The beautifully crafted graphics were the first thing that hit you, a real piece gaming of eye candy.

Your task was to progress through the levels while ridding the land of evil and the assortment of beasties placed in your way. Once your character had been chosen from the three available; each with their own pros, cons, weaponry and magic skills, it was time to give evil a slap.

There are giant mosquitoes, jellyfish with hands and griffins that all required blasting. At the end of each level there was the obligatory boss to remove but, again, the detail in the design of these bosses was amazing, from a two-headed fire-breathing hydra to assorted dragons.

While the arcade coin-op is the definitive version, *Sol Divide* was later ported to PlayStation, PlayStation 2 and the Sega Saturn and, thankfully, the stunning graphical standards were maintained across all platforms.

Capcom's coin-op release for this month was *Vampire Savior: The Lord Of Vampire*, a colourful and frenetic 2D fighting game. The title was renamed to *Darkstalkers 3* when released in North America and Europe, with the basic premise of the game being the all too common defeating of a high-ranking evildoer. The gameplay followed the same line as previous *Darkstalker* games but with much improved graphics and a larger roster of characters to select from.

The cartoon-like sprites were bold, colourful and animated superbly. The backdrops were equally intense. While the graphics and the atmospheric music made the initial favourable impression, it was the game mechanics that really grabbed you by the throat. The controls were easy to learn and made the combat element a joy to play, particularly when deploying many of the bonkers special moves.

If kicking the face off someone isn't your cup of tea then maybe you could try kicking a football on a piece of rope, or to give the game its proper name, *Kick It!* by Global VR.

The game was simply a football penalty shootout simulation. With a big screen situated above a large gaping

CHARTS

MAY 1997



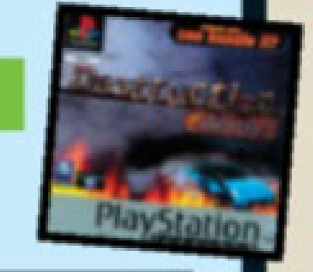
NINTENDO 64

1 Super Mario 64 (Nintendo)
2 Turok: Dinosaur Hunter (Acclaim)
3 Star Wars: Shadows Of The Empire (LucasArts/Nintendo)
4 Pilotwings 64 (Nintendo)
5 FIFA Soccer 64 (Electronic Arts)



PC

1 Magic: The Gathering (MicroProse)
2 Scourge Of Armagon (Activision)
3 Command And Conquer: Red Alert (Virgin Games)
4 Championship Manager 2 Double Pack (Eidos)
5 Tomb Raider (Eidos)



PLAYSTATION

1 Destruction Derby: Platinum (Sony)
2 Destruction Derby 2 (Sony)
3 Cool Boarders (Sony)
4 WipEout: Platinum (Sony)
5 Tomb Raider (Eidos)



MUSIC

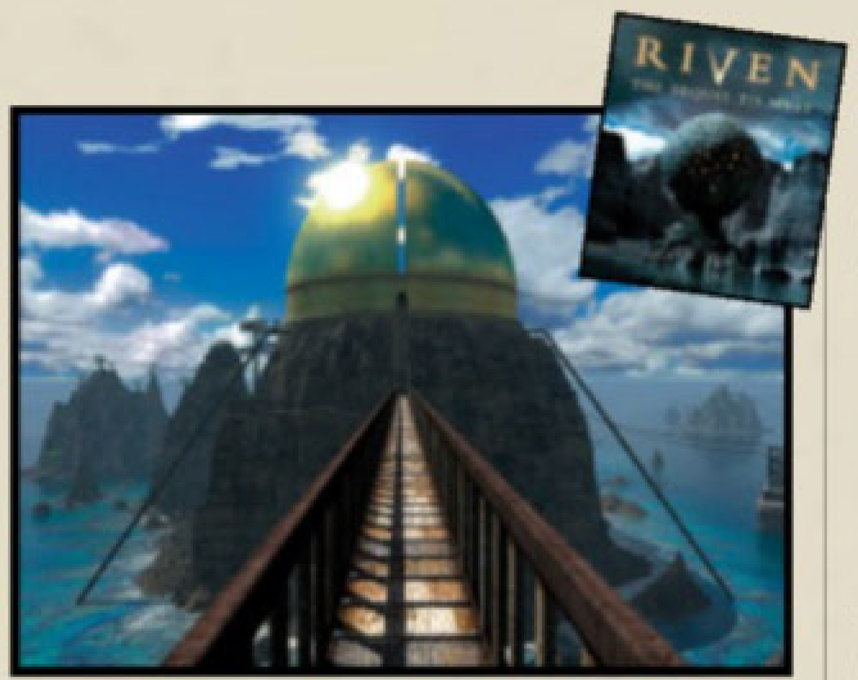
1 You're Not Alone (Olive)
2 Lovefool (Cardigans)
3 Love Won't Wait (Gary Barlow)
4 Time To Say Goodbye (Sarah Brightman & Andrea Bocelli)
5 You Might Need Somebody (Shola Ama)





» [PlayStation] Pitfall Harry was back and in 3D, but could the game retain the feel of the original?





» [PC] *Riven*, the sequel to *Myst*, had a hard act to follow but managed it with a beautifully detailed adventure.

hole in the centre of the cabinet, you had to place the ball past the keeper which invariably meant gamers resorting to ten yard run-ups followed by a hefty toe-punt. Quirky, but a one-credit wonder.

The final arcade release of the month was the oddity known as *Armadillo Racing*. Released by Namco, you and up to three friends raced armadillos around a course by feverishly pushing your trackball controller forward while steering. It was as much a test of endurance as a test of skill.

A bonus level of armadillo bowling lay in wait for the winner with it concluding with you entering your initials on the high score table and in a funny and ingenious way. Cue a monkey with a baseball bat… *Armadillo Racing* was bizarre but also great fun.

Activision announced that it was to dust off its *Pitfall* franchise and give gainful employment to an old adventurer once again in *Pitfall 3D: Beyond The Jungle* for the PlayStation. Development was underway with a proposed release date of early 1998.

The vine swinging and scorpions would still be in there but could Activision recapture the essence of the original? The 3D graphics worked very well although the jumping was difficult to judge, but the feel of the original thankfully remained. A nice surprise element was that Pitfall Harry had a voice and was constantly commentating throughout. Better still, Bruce Campbell was delivering the lines. Groovy.

Point-and-click adventure gamers rejoiced with news that the development of the sequel to the hugely successful *Myst* was nearing completion after three long years. *Riven: Myst 2* would be initially released on PC with further formats catered for.



» [Arcade] *Vampire Savior*, aka *Darkstalkers 3*, was an excellent beat-'em-up with smooth cartoon graphics.

Like the original you had to decipher puzzles, decode strange symbols and work out how peculiar steampunk-style mechanical contraptions worked as you progressed through the strange yet beautiful islands of Riven. It was completely immersive and once in you were hooked by the feel of the place and driven by the cleverly constructed puzzle elements. It was a much bigger and complex game and was destined to be another hit for Cyan and Red Orb.

PC gamers were also treated to a newly released futuristic racing game called *POD: Planet Of Death* developed by Ubisoft. Your planet was dying from a virus and most of the population had escaped in spaceships. There was one ship remaining and a lot of people wanted to be on it, understandably. A set of high-octane races were run with the winner getting the last seat off the planet.

With detailed tracks, cars and scenery all packaged together in one ridiculously fast racing game, *POD* looked to be a winner but what really made *POD* was that it was one of the first games to support 3D acceleration, and for good reason, as *POD* also had several online multiplayer options including an split-screen game and an entertaining eight-person multiplayer race. While not quite matching *WipEout* for playability, *POD* was certainly a must-play game for the PC.

Completing a trio of PC titles was the release of Bullfrog's latest business simulation, *Theme Hospital*. You had to build, run, equip and staff your hospital while ensuring illnesses and outbreaks were cured. The overwhelming attention to detail was astonishing, with every minute aspect and detail requiring attention.

Thankfully, *Theme Hospital* was sugar coated with a substantial dose of humour to lighten things up, highlighted by guffaw-inducing ailments such as Bloaty Head, The Squits and Heaped Piles. *Theme Hospital* was entertaining and testing in equal measure and became another critical and commercial success for Bullfrog Productions. *

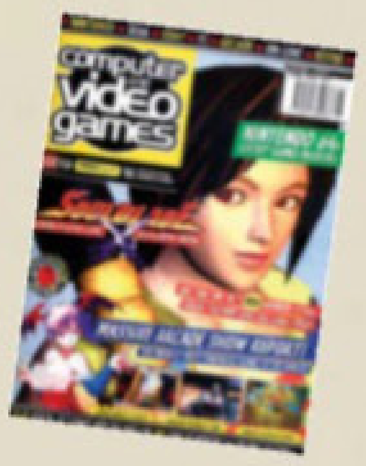


» [PC] Build your own hospital and run it in Bullfrog's excellent simulator.

THIS MONTH IN…

COMPUTER & VIDEOGAMES

Further evidence of the tireless revival in retrogaming appeared with the glowing review of *Namco Museum 4* for the PlayStation. It featured a right old mixed bag of classics: *Pac-Land, Assault, The Return Of Ishtar, Genpei Toh Maden* and *Ordyne*, but the *C&VG* reviewer loved it.



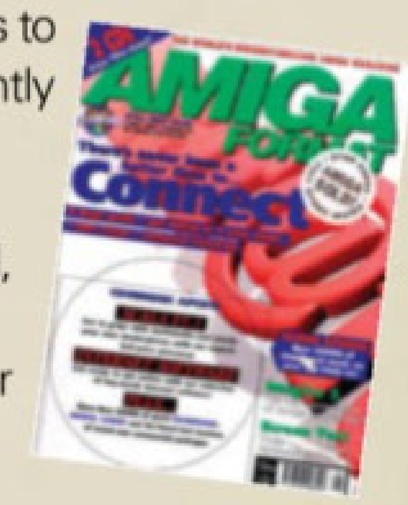
SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE

What do you get if you deform characters from two of the biggest fighting franchises, *Street Fighter* and *Darkstalkers*, and shoehorn them into a *Columns*-style game? *Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo*. Nauseating colourful, it was also very playable and garnered great reviews.



AMIGA FORMAT

A breaking news article that slipped into *Amiga Format* at the last minute revealed the long-awaited identity of the company that had placed the winning bid for Amiga Technologies to snatch it from the recently liquidated Escom. It wasn't Viscorp or QuikPak, as anticipated, but the personal computer manufacturer Gateway 2000.



MAY WORLD NEWS

2 May saw the return to power of the Labour Party in a landslide general election victory. The Conservatives had been in power for the previous 18 years but were completely crushed by the Tony Blair-led Labour, dubbed New Labour by the media.

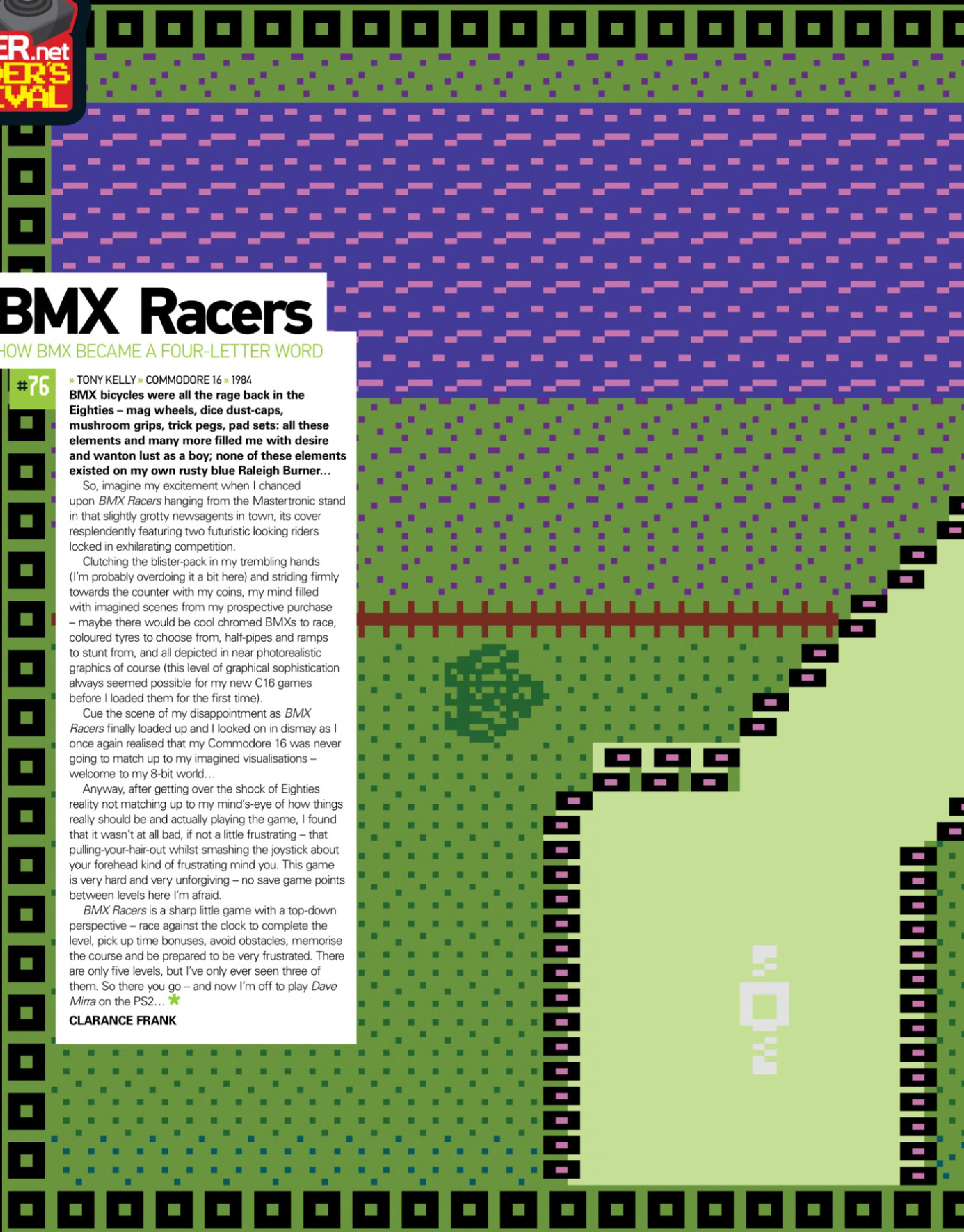
3 May saw the United Kingdom win the Eurovision Song Contest with Katrina And The Waves singing *Love Shine A Light* with Ireland placing a close second. Since then the UK has barely placed anywhere due to the perceived use of political and geographical voting… and the songs being really rubbish.

7 May saw the world premiere of the sci-fi film *The Fifth Element* starring Bruce Willis and Milla Jovovich and dinosaurs returned in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, which arrived on 19 May.

11 May saw IBM's chess-playing super computer Deep Blue triumph in a contest against the World Champion and chess grandmaster, Garry Kasparov. Deep Blue registered a record of two wins, three draws and one defeat to Kasparov who didn't take the defeat well. He accused IBM of cheating by allowing human intervention mid-game. IBM refuted this. Kasparov demanded a rematch. IBM refused and dismantled Deep Blue.

24 May saw Irish-born actor Edward Mulhare pass away from lung cancer aged 74. Mulhare is best remembered as the character Devon Miles in the action series *Knight Rider* starring opposite David Hasselhoff.

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



BMX Racers

HOW BMX BECAME A FOUR-LETTER WORD

#76

» TONY KELLY » COMMODORE 16 » 1984

BMX bicycles were all the rage back in the Eighties – mag wheels, dice dust-caps, mushroom grips, trick pegs, pad sets: all these elements and many more filled me with desire and wanton lust as a boy; none of these elements existed on my own rusty blue Raleigh Burner…

So, imagine my excitement when I chanced upon *BMX Racers* hanging from the Mastertronic stand in that slightly grotty newsagents in town, its cover resplendently featuring two futuristic looking riders locked in exhilarating competition.

Clutching the blister-pack in my trembling hands (I'm probably overdoing it a bit here) and striding firmly towards the counter with my coins, my mind filled with imagined scenes from my prospective purchase – maybe there would be cool chromed BMXs to race, coloured tyres to choose from, half-pipes and ramps to stunt from, and all depicted in near photorealistic graphics of course (this level of graphical sophistication always seemed possible for my new C16 games before I loaded them for the first time).

Cue the scene of my disappointment as *BMX Racers* finally loaded up and I looked on in dismay as I once again realised that my Commodore 16 was never going to match up to my imagined visualisations – welcome to my 8-bit world…

Anyway, after getting over the shock of Eighties reality not matching up to my mind's-eye of how things really should be and actually playing the game, I found that it wasn't at all bad, if not a little frustrating – that pulling-your-hair-out whilst smashing the joystick about your forehead kind of frustrating mind you. This game is very hard and very unforgiving – no save game points between levels here I'm afraid.

BMX Racers is a sharp little game with a top-down perspective – race against the clock to complete the level, pick up time bonuses, avoid obstacles, memorise the course and be prepared to be very frustrated. There are only five levels, but I've only ever seen three of them. So there you go – and now I'm off to play *Dave Mirra* on the PS2… ★

CLARANCE FRANK


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A MOMENT WITH...

Geoff Brown

Every issue, we put an industry veteran in the hotseat. This month, David Crookes speaks to founder of games publisher US Gold, Geoff Brown



» [C64] Epyx's *Impossible Mission* was one of US Gold's best imports.

Who is Geoff Brown?

Maths teacher Geoff Brown founded US Gold in Birmingham in 1984. He had bought a few games from the United States via a magazine called *Compute!* and he showed one of them, *Galactic Chase*, to the local manager of Curry's. Claiming to be the exclusive UK distributor of the game, he managed to secure a deal with the chain and soon built up a portfolio of titles. Having initially tied up a deal with Ocean Software, the company went on to work with Capcom, Access Software, Epyx and many more, releasing titles such as *Strider*, *California Games*, *Final Fight* and *Chip's Challenge* under the US Gold brand. US Gold also moved into development and it owned Core Design, developer of *Tomb Raider*.



» [CPC] *Strider* was one of US Gold's many imports from America and Japan.



» Kixx was US Gold's budget game label.



Which of your US Gold games would you recommend to our readers and why?
I think *Gauntlet* was a super conversion from a coin-op to a home computer at the time. And in a very short time it sold a million copies across formats and was one of my big successes. Then went on to sell another million copies as a featured game on the US Gold compilation series *They Sold A Million!*.

What is your proudest memory?
I think it was when, between CentreSoft Distribution and US Gold Publishing, we turned over our first £1 million in a month! I had a pen engraved and gave one to every key member of staff. Maybe they are still around as collector's items now?

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
Getting it finished on time. Nothing changes and the same problems still persist. I think *Gauntlet* was finished and in the shops on Christmas Eve. You can't cut it finer than that!

Which industry veteran do you most admire?
Probably Rod Cousens [former president of Activision and COO of Acclaim, and the current CEO of Codemasters] as he was a big rival but also a friend at the time and still is. He really tried to bring a professional business profile and status to the fledgling industry.

How would you like your games to be remembered?
Incredibly well marketed, advertised and packaged as well as releasing some historic landmark products which changed the quality of UK games in general. Products like *Beach Head*, *Impossible Mission*, *Flashback*, *Summer Games*, *Gauntlet*, *OutRun*, *Spy Hunter* and many, many more.

Which game do you wish you'd made and why?
Probably *Ghostbusters*. It was a movie, a hit record and a brilliant game with impeccable timing as a Christmas release and went straight to number one.

What opportunities has making videogames given you?
So many it is hard to list them. Maybe the top of the list would be to travel the world and meet some fantastic people. From dinner with the CEO of Sega in Tokyo to having VIP status at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, to having my own US Gold offices in San Francisco, Paris, Madrid, Milan, Dusseldorf, Austria and Scandinavia as well as many other destinations. What a trip for me coming from very humble beginnings in Winson Green in Birmingham.

What's your darkest memory of being in the games industry?
When the company was struggling in the late Nineties and I had to sell out to Eidos. Not that it wasn't a great deal for me personally it was just a tough time to lose staff and people who had helped to build the company over the years.

And your best?
It is honestly hard to name just one as there are so many. Maybe the flotation on the UK stock market in 1993. We were the first videogame company to list on the UK market and I was able to cash-in in some ways on all the years of hard work and effort I had put in. I think the company was valued way back then at around $90 million. It seemed like *Monopoly* numbers to me.

How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
Well I am now chairman of a very successful app publishing company, FairPlay Media, so still totally active in the business of developing games. I think that console games have completely eradicated the start-up entrepreneurs that were bred in the Eighties, and they have switched to the app industry where they can 'flap their wings' so to speak, just to name one groundbreaking app that could just as easily been on a Spectrum in the early days. *



» [CPC] The infamous US Gold mark on the CPC version of *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*.



CRAZY TAXI™

15 years after the series first blasted The Offspring into arcades, **Retro Gamer** flags down Kenji Kanno to chat about Sega's hit driving franchise

Dear reader, allow us to set the scene for you. It is 1:24 on a Saturday morning in Essex, where a man is disembarking from a cab outside his house, visibly shaken. This man has just completed a 12-minute journey home in half that time, thanks to a driver whose skills include an incredible aptitude for paint-scraping near misses and an inability to see red lights. The driver's heavy Glaswegian accent rendered most of his chatter unintelligible to the passenger, and while the passenger shared the sentiments he understood, they are unsuitable to print in a publication like ours. Any normal person leaving this cab would note the number plate and report this menace to the authorities, but the passenger wasn't normal – the passenger was us, and instead we simply thought 'this is probably the closest we'll ever get to being in *Crazy Taxi*'.

For the more law-abiding drivers amongst us this kind of action is a mere fantasy born of M25 tailbacks, and a congested road is where inspiration struck Sega's Kenji Kanno. "I'm a bit of a car enthusiast, and one day I was out driving for fun but I got stuck in traffic," Kanno tells us. "But the other side of the road was completely clear! When I saw that, I thought there must be hundreds of other people thinking like me – if I could drive on the other side of the road, I could have a lot more fun and get there quicker." That fleeting feeling of rebellion against the rules of the road became the basis for *Crazy Taxi's* death-defying driving action, but it was far from the only influence that Kanno drew from. "At the time, there were a lot of racing games. To be honest, I was quite tired of them," he reveals. "There are a lot of films based on car action. I thought that if I could make a game that was like them, people would get a lot of enjoyment from it."

It's a revelation that is a little surprising given that racing games are a staple of the arcade market, but one that makes sense. Driving scenes in films had also inspired the development of *Driver*, a title that joined *Crazy Taxi* in laying the foundations for the open-world driving subgenre. But where *Driver* had been inspired by the classic car chase movies of the Seventies, *Crazy Taxi* drew on more contemporary influences – not least California's punk rock scene, whose output would prove crucial to the game's development due to Kanno's design philosophy. "Although this is seen as a racing game, I always ▶







» [Dreamcast] Frequent collisions are a staple of *Crazy Taxi* – the only car you can't flip is your own.



» [Dreamcast] The downhill leaps that kick off the first game are arguably the most iconic moment in the series.

intended to create it as an action game, and with action games it's all about rhythm and tempo," he explains. "Before making the game, I actually already had the music that I wanted in the game set first, and then had the creators go away and design the game around the music, so that the rhythm would be in sync with the music."

The California spirit didn't just extend to the inclusion of The Offspring and Bad Religion on the soundtrack. Kanno's desire for a bright and hilly environment resulted in an environment based on San Francisco, and while it wasn't an accurate recreation of the city, it did include real-world locations. "I wanted it to have a sense of realism," Kanno recalls, "the best way to get that across, I thought, was to have places that people would relate to." Passengers would frequently ask to be taken to destinations such as Tower Records, KFC and Pizza Hut as well as the game's generic locations such as the stadium, the police station and the mall.

These appealing factors ensured that *Crazy Taxi* quickly became an arcade staple when it launched in 1999. Players were grabbed by the bright visuals, driving stunts and an attract sequence that literally cried out for players to have some fun with the game. However, they were kept around by the addictive game mechanics. Driving dangerously wasn't just encouraged but rewarded, with players gaining additional tips on their fares for near misses, drifts and jumps. Although the customer's destination would remain a secret until they were picked up, coloured icons above their heads would alert you to the distance and difficulty of their desired journey – important, because a quick journey rewards players with additional seconds on the clock.

Having experienced success with the coin-op, Sega was keen to get the game onto the Dreamcast quickly. Although the title shipped on the NAOMI arcade board – essentially, a modified Dreamcast – the conversion still posed some problems due to the size of the city environment. In the arcade, the

> **"It succeeded because it offered something that other games at the time weren't offering"**
>
> Kenji Kanno





» Kanno is an enthusiastic interviewee, clearly pleased that *Crazy Taxi* retains its strong appeal.



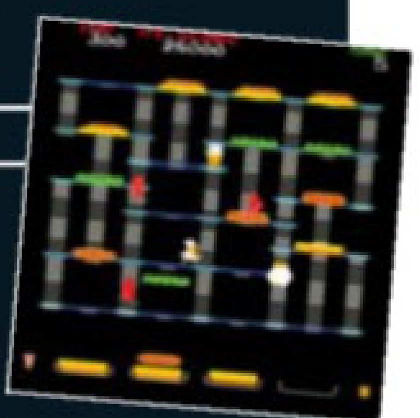
» [Dreamcast] *Crazy Taxi*'s sense of humour even extends under the ocean, where snorkel-wearing passengers await.

EXTREME EMPLOYMENT

Crazy Taxi wasn't the only game to intensify a mundane job

BURGERTIME

■ ARCADE ■ 1982



Poor old Peter Pepper puts up with some nightmarish working conditions in Data East's arcade classic. The poor chef is trying to put together burgers while being chased by anthropomorphic eggs, hot dogs and pickles. We don't imagine staff at McDonald's are forced to put up with murderous food…

POWER DIGGERZ

■ PLAYSTATION ■ 2000



JCB drivers already have a sweet deal thanks to the awesome power of their vehicles, but this overlooked gem made construction equipment even more fun than normal. Destroying cars, scooping turtles from swimming pools, serving 200 litres of curry onto giant plates – Taito's game lets you do all this and more.

SEGAGAGA

■ DREAMCAST ■ 2001



Sega's Japan-only RPG lets you take charge of Sega in the year 2025, by which time it has become just a tad different. Developers are locked behind gigantic blast doors producing games like *Final Pharmacy VIII*, and are occasionally required to blast into space to fend off attacking Sega hardware…

PHOENIX WRIGHT: ACE ATTORNEY

■ GAME BOY ADVANCE ■ 2001



Being a lawyer might not sound like the most exciting thing in the world, but Phoenix Wright's cases are full of shouting and table-banging – and that's before any of the game's spirit mediums get involved. At one point, you'll even need to bring a parrot to the stand for cross-examination.

TRAUMA CENTER: UNDER THE KNIFE

■ NINTENDO DS ■ 2005



Extraordinary healing powers gained from the Greek god Asclepius are only the start of the weirdness in this surgery simulator from Atlus. The plot sees you taking on a man-made disease known as GUILT, being spread by an organisation of terrorists whose leader is 121 years old.

open driving environment wasn't such a large issue because the NAOMI had the benefit of loading the game from cartridge, and twice as much RAM as the home system. To overcome the Dreamcast's limitations, Kanno's team had to program a method of streaming city data from the disc during gameplay. It proved to be worth the effort, as the Dreamcast conversion proves virtually indistinguishable from the original arcade game.

As well as being a practically perfect port, the Dreamcast version of *Crazy Taxi* included additional features. Most prominent was the Original Mode, which allowed players to enjoy a brand new city with a twisting street section and a railway. There was also the Crazy Box Mode, a selection of driving mini-games, in which taxis were used to pop balloons and knock down bowling pins. Kanno asked the team to think independently about mini-game concepts outside of work, before coming together in the office to select the ideas that would be used in the game. "We looked at different elements of the game that could be scored against, like drifting or dashing," recalls the director, highlighting the mode's role in teach players advanced techniques. "It was something that people could play and have fun with, but also use as practice."



» [Dreamcast] Drifting is a speedy way to negotiate the 90-degree corners in downtown areas.



» [Dreamcast] A good job will reward you with more money and a five-second time bonus.



» [Dreamcast] Drop-off points are indicated by these green markers, making your destination easier to find.

Launching at the beginning of 2000, the Dreamcast version of *Crazy Taxi* received a massively enthusiastic response from the press, gaining acclaim for the quality of its conversion. Surprisingly, it's acclaim that Kanno himself had been unaware of. "I didn't actually know that it was regarded that way," he responded when asked for his thoughts on the game's reception. "I think the key reason that it succeeded is because it offered something that other games at the time weren't offering. Maybe it's down to who is giving that feedback." The public responded with equal enthusiasm, purchasing over 1 million copies and providing the Dreamcast with an early highlight in its lifespan.

But financial realities had hit Sega hard and just a year later the company announced its exit from the hardware business and made plans for its games to appear on the consoles of its former competitors. Acclaim licensed the game and developed PlayStation 2 and GameCube conversions in-house, while Sega contracted the development of the PC version to Strangelite. None of the conversions had the critical impact of the Dreamcast release, though the PlayStation 2 version eventually outsold its predecessor. Free of all the conversion work, Kanno's team at Hitmaker had time to produce something far more exciting – a *Crazy Taxi* sequel.

Despite its hardware woes, Sega never planned *Crazy Taxi 2* as anything other than a Dreamcast game. The basic formula of driving recklessly to get customers to their destinations hadn't changed, but the setting had as *Crazy Taxi 2* introduced four new characters and two new maps. Based on New York, these maps were dense urban environments with fewer natural hills, with roads bordered in by skyscrapers. This design played into the team's plan to give the player a new kind of control. "With *Crazy Taxi*, it was basically a lane-



» Confronted with a Dreamcast, Kenji Kanno tries to remember *Crazy Taxi*'s advanced techniques.

"I wanted it to have a sense of realism. The best way was to have places people relate to"
Kenji Kanno



» Kanno's memory serves him well, as he remembers how to reach some oddly-located fares.

based game and you could only avoid by going left or right, so it was very much a 2D game in that sense," Kanno explains. "With *Crazy Taxi 2*, we wanted to bring a bit more of a 3D element into the game, and the Crazy Hop is the result of what we were trying to achieve."

The Crazy Hop was a new ability introduced in *Crazy Taxi 2* which allowed taxis to jump. Though Around Apple and Small Apple didn't have a lot of hills, they made up for that with overpasses and rooftop shortcuts, allowing players with quick reactions to shave seconds off their times. What's more, the new mini-games in the Crazy Pyramid Mode made heavy use of the new addition, with jumping-based games such as Crazy Stairs. Another new addition was passenger groups. Up to four customers were now able to board your taxi, each with different destinations in close proximity to one another. Time limits for groups were noticeably strict, but expert players could rack up crazy money for taking them – as well as awarding larger fares, groups gave a multiplier on tips for each passenger.

While *Crazy Taxi 2* launched to good reviews in the middle of 2001, it didn't achieve the same level of praise as its predecessor. Critics praised the retention of the original game's manic action and the inclusion of more music from The Offspring, but felt that the game didn't do enough to improve over its predecessor, thanks to its near-identical visuals and minor gameplay enhancements. In fact, the most major change was the most controversial. "Some people find it difficult, some people find it really enjoyable, but we see it as a mixed reception," explains Kanno, talking about the Crazy Hop. For purists, the thrill of dodging traffic was diminished by the ease of leaping over it – you'd receive tips regardless – but proponents of the mechanic enjoyed the additional shortcuts it provided. Despite the mixed reception, the Crazy Hop would carry over into the last of the major *Crazy Taxi* releases.

Crazy Taxi 3 was one of Sega's early exclusives for Microsoft's Xbox. At



» Kanno gesticulates while explaining the origins of the Crazy Hop mechanics from *Crazy Taxi 2*.





» [Dreamcast] As well as a new city, *Crazy Taxi 2* brought a new set of cabbies – here's Slash in action.



» [Dreamcast] The environments are nice, but the tall buildings obscure Sega's blue skies.

the time it was a surprising choice of platform – it's easy to forget that the Xbox was something of an unknown quantity even as late as 2002, thanks to Microsoft's lack of experience in the console market. What's more, *Crazy Taxi* had already sold well on the PlayStation 2. However, Kanno tells us that it was the American company's enthusiasm for the series that influenced the decision. "We had a chance to talk to Microsoft about *Crazy Taxi* and they were really keen, they had a lot of love to show for *Crazy Taxi*. It was all about love!"

Early plans for *Crazy Taxi 3* were more ambitious than for *Crazy Taxi 2*. Early interviews with Hisao Oguchi, who had served as producer on the first two games, mentioned that multiplayer had been experimented with but ultimately abandoned. Other plans included the addition of day and night cycles, so that customers and destinations would change as the day went on. The team undertook location scouting, even returning to previously used cities like New York. "I didn't want to go," Kanno explains of the trip, "but the designer did go on a really tough schedule. Exactly a week before 9/11 he was in the building. In that sense, it's a location scout that left an impression. It's a bit eerie, isn't it?"

Unfortunately, these plans would not come to fruition. "As you know, in development we always have to battle between shipping what we really want to do, and the time that we realistically have set to complete the challenge," begins Kanno's response when asked about the scrapped features. "We didn't have an infinite amount of time to do everything and it's true that there were certain things that we wanted to do, but we couldn't complete within the time that we had." Ironically, these time constraints would ensure that *Crazy Taxi 3* was the ▶

"It's true that there were certain things we wanted to do, but we couldn't within the time we had"
Kenji Kanno



» [Dreamcast] Picking up multiple passengers is a risk, but success is highly rewarding.




» *Crazy Taxi*'s director takes great care in explaining the careful design behind the series' reckless driving.

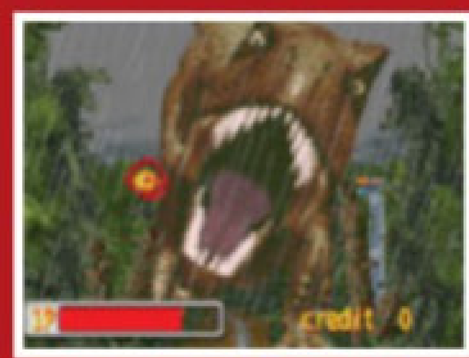
▶ most conservative of the trilogy in design terms.

The final version ended up serving as a kind of greatest hits package, albeit one with significant additions. Two maps from previous games returned with updates – *Crazy Taxi*'s arcade map West Coast came back with some new areas designed to take advantage of the Crazy Hop, alongside *Crazy Taxi 2*'s Small Apple, now set at night. *Crazy Taxi 3*'s sole original map was Glitter Oasis, a Las Vegas-themed map set at night to allow the bright lights to take centre stage, with the outskirts including a canyon area. Four more new characters made their debut alongside the eight existing drivers, and another set of mini-games was on offer in the Crazy X Mode.

Crazy Taxi 3 arrived in the middle of 2002 to a reasonably positive but undeniably underwhelming critical response. While critics still generally enjoyed the game's core mechanics, the consensus was that the game just didn't bring enough new content to the table. The game also struggled on a technical level, with reviewers complaining of noticeable draw distance problems and prominent slowdown, particularly in the flagship Glitter Oasis stage. The 2004 PC conversion, once again handled by Strangelite, fared little better. However, *Crazy Taxi 3* did manage to make a return journey to the arcade. Sega adopted the Xbox-based Chihiro board for arcade releases in 2003, and Kanno saw an unusual home-to-arcade conversion as the natural choice. "It seemed to be a natural fit, a case of 'hey, if we release this content, we'll have happy consumers'," he reflects.

RETURN JOURNEY

A look back at what Kenji Kanno did before Crazy Taxi



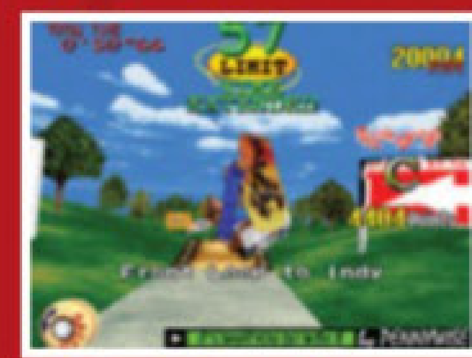
JURASSIC PARK

■ Sega's excellent lightgun shooter was Kanji Kanno's debut as a game director. While it didn't utilise the 3D graphics technology of the time, *Jurassic Park* proved that 2D games could still impress players, thanks to memorable attacks from a herd of stampeding triceratops and an absolutely enormous T-Rex.



FUNKY HEAD BOXERS

■ This boxing game utilised Sega's budget ST-V arcade board. The Saturn-based hardware wasn't the best at displaying complex 3D characters, so the team utilised a different approach – box-headed pugilists with detailed facial textures, who reacted to blows with some bizarre expressions.



TOP SKATER

■ This arcade cabinet is memorable for its controller, which allowed players to play with their feet. Players needed to complete courses without time running out, collecting time bonus tokens and performing tricks along the way. Like *Crazy Taxi*, it features a licensed punk rock soundtrack – this time courtesy of Pennywise.



In 2003, THQ acquired the rights to publish a Game Boy Advance version of Crazy Taxi. Developed by Graphic State Games, Crazy Taxi: Catch A Ride proved to be an awkward fit for the handheld system. Much like other attempts at 3D driving games on the system, Crazy Taxi suffered from blocky visuals and a poor frame rate and the game received a critical battering when it launched. Later that year, the series managed to make the news thanks to a patent infringement lawsuit. Sega sued Electronic Arts, Fox Interactive and Radical Entertainment over The Simpsons: Road Rage, a 2001 release that had been noted for its extreme similarity to Crazy Taxi. The lawsuit was settled out of court for an undisclosed sum soon after being filed.

In recent years, Crazy Taxi has been employed primarily as a nostalgic capacity. 2007's Crazy Taxi: Fare Wars was a PSP compilation of the first two games. While the game suffered the loss of licensed shops and music, it did benefit from the first-time inclusion of multiplayer modes. The original Crazy Taxi later found its way to Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC, again missing its licensed aspects. These versions did at


» [Xbox] Setting Glitter Oasis at night allowed for the Vegas-inspired bright lights to shine.



» [Xbox] The remade West Coast map in *Crazy Taxi 3* included a whole new area built to utilise Crazy Hop.

CRAZY PYRAMID

Some of the best mini-games the series has to offer



CRAZY SPECIAL

■ *Crazy Taxi 2*'s final challenge is a nightmare – you must visit every drop-off point in Small Apple with a useless guide arrow!

CRAZY ZIGZAG 2

■ One of the tougher mini-games – seven passengers, 40 seconds and one narrow road in the middle of the ocean. Don't get wet!

CRAZY ARCHES

■ A right royal pain, this game requires careful use of the Crazy Hop to leap from arch to arch. Repeated drowning is probable.

CRAZY BOWLING

■ Drift into the pins to score seven consecutive strikes. It sounds simple but this mini-game proves deceptively tough.

CRAZY PARKING

■ Battle your way to the top of a packed multi-storey car park! The tight time limit here is a killer.

CRAZY STAIRS

■ Easy to explain, hard to master – hop up a series of ascending steps in order to reach the goal. Expect plummeting.

CRAZY BALLOONS

■ A classic, in which you chase balloons around and pop them. Another game that made multiple appearances.

CRAZY HURDLES

■ This one's pretty easy, you just need to leap over the hurdles and reach the finish line. This one's good for score competitions.

CRAZY GOLF

■ You need to use Crazy Hop to drive a ball as far as possible – an easy but enjoyable task from *Crazy Taxi 2*.

CRAZY JUMP

■ A series staple appearing in all three games, Crazy Jump sees you hurling your cab off a ramp as far as possible.



least include an option to use custom soundtracks, for those desperately missing their Bad Religion fix. Versions for iOS and Android restored the soundtrack, but not the shopping.

The newest *Crazy Taxi* release to hit the market is *Crazy Taxi: City Rush*, a free-to-play mobile game which deftly combines the spirit of Sega's series with the runner format as popularised by games like *Temple Run*. "*Crazy Taxi* is in essence a casual game, but it's got this charm and allure that makes it really addictive," says Kanno of the decision to take the series in this brand new direction. "Because mobile is so widespread now, we thought that would be a perfect platform to go onto." The conversion has been handled by Hardlight, a UK-based Sega studio that specialises in games for mobile platforms – a decision which Kanno attributes to the game's greater popularity in the West.

While the game is unmistakably a part of the runner genre, it does contain some of *Crazy Taxi*'s signature mechanics – for example, players are still awarded Crazy Through combos for dodging between vehicles. But mechanical authenticity hasn't been the key for Kanno, who is more concerned with retaining the spirit of the series. As he puts it, "it's not really about the techniques, the technicalities or the mechanics, it's more about 'does it feel like a *Crazy Taxi*?'" In that regard, the game delivers, with original characters like Gena and BD Joe even making cameo appearances. *Crazy Taxi: City Rush* also introduces new gameplay elements, such as upgradeable taxis.

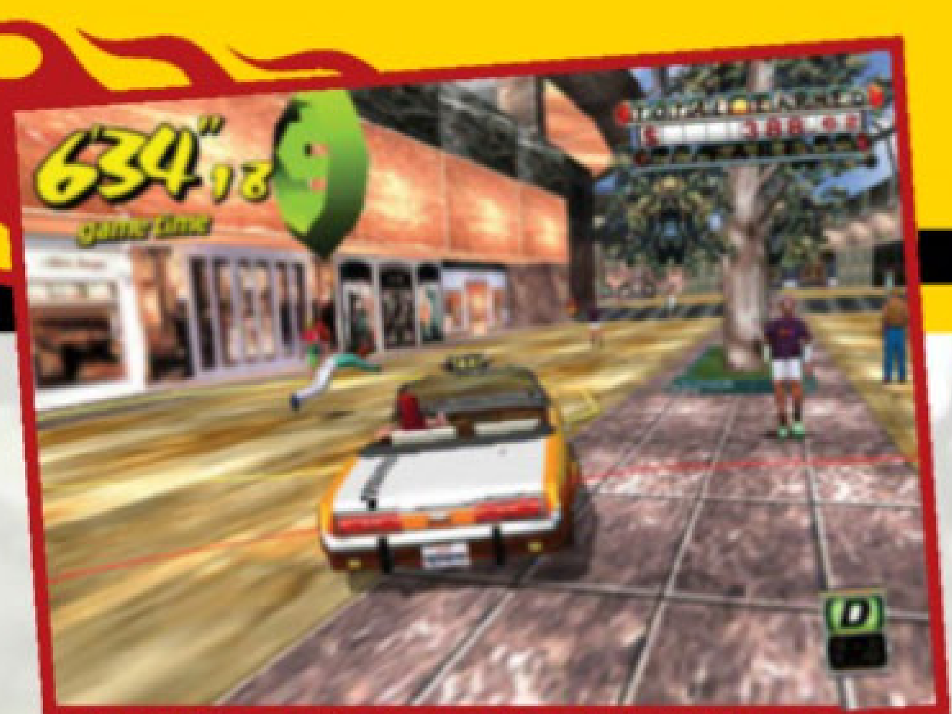
Such advances seem core to Kanno's outlook on games, as he is firmly focused on the future. This is a trait ▶



THE KNOWLEDGE

A cabbie's guide to picking up crazy money





BRING TERROR TO THE MALL BY DRIVING THROUGH IT



DON'T WAIT FOR THE END OF THE ROAD TO DO A U-TURN!

BEING ON THE ROOF IS TOTALLY PUNK ROCK, RIGHT?

KFC SHORTCUT – ANOTHER CUSTOMER YOU MIGHT MISS DOWN HERE

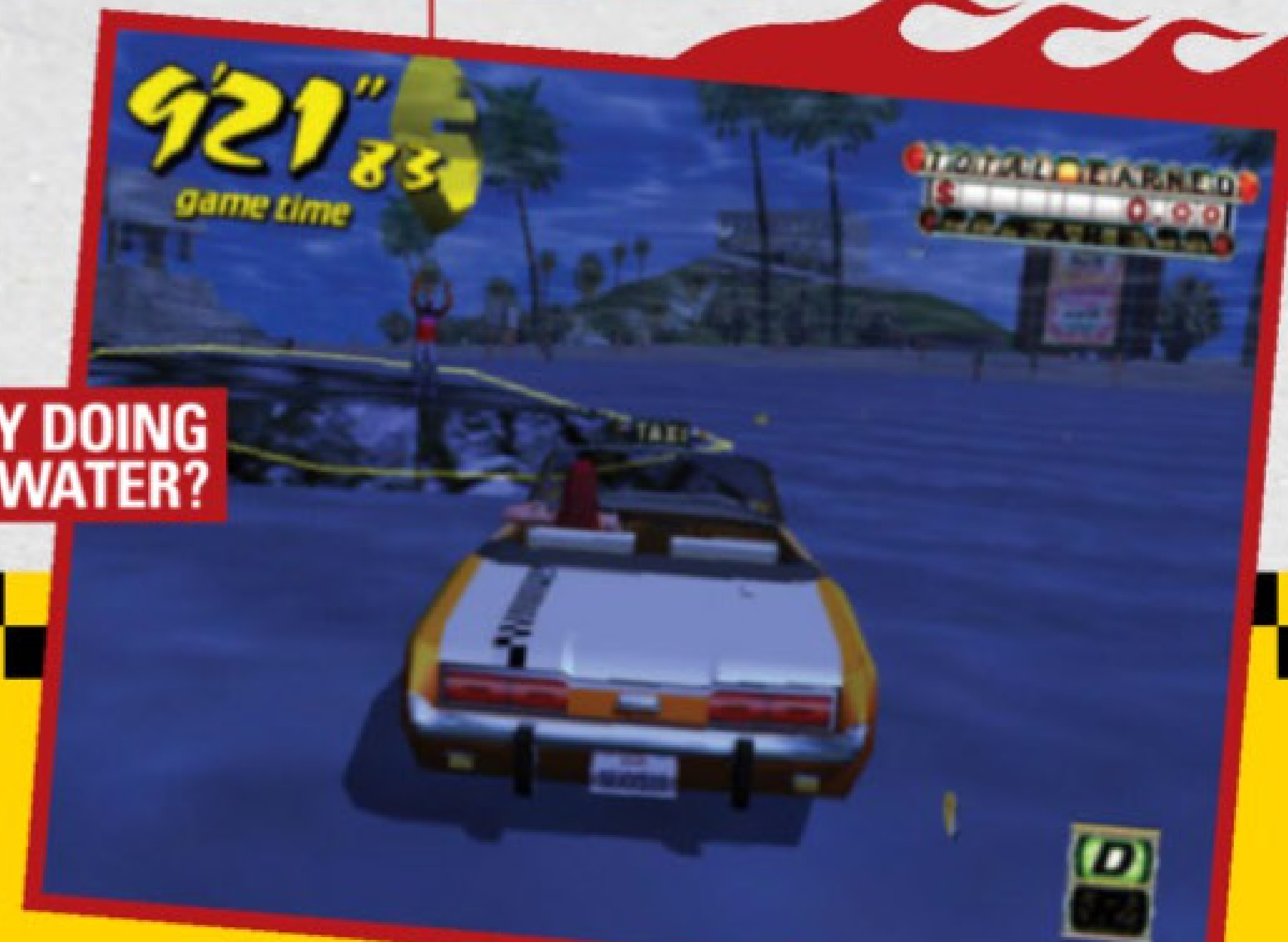
COOL GRANDMA, JUST CHILLIN' ON THE ROOF

MOTEL SHORTCUT – SMASH THOSE BOXES!

MULTI-STOREY CAR PARK – AWESOME JUMP OPPORTUNITY!

RESCUE THIS LADY FROM HER BROKEN-DOWN CAR!

CHEEKY SHORTCUT – YOUR ONLY CHANCE TO CHANGE LANES HERE



WHAT'S THIS GUY DOING UNDERWATER?



> **"For me, as a creator, I'm always thinking about what's next"**
> Kenji Kanno

most evident when he's asked about what achievements he takes pride in. "To be honest, throughout *Crazy Taxi 1, 2* and *3* I don't have anything that I'm particularly proud of," is the surprising response. "You probably interview a lot of people and for me, it's great that you've played our game and you've really enjoyed it," he continues, "but for me, as a creator, I'm always thinking about what's next."

Even so, *Crazy Taxi* has left its mark on gaming history. Well over a decade after the first arcade-goer was challenged to make some crazy money, the trademark action of the series still has an appeal that resurfaces any time a player sees a dangerous driver, just as it did for us. And, as his final anecdote reveals, it's an appeal that even Kanno has experienced first-hand: "I was in Las Vegas once, on holiday, and this taxi driver was just driving at breakneck speed to get me to my destination. And then, just as I was getting out of the cab, he said 'I'm *Crazy Taxi*!' but he didn't even know who I was! He was just some crazy taxi driver!" We can only hope he was awarded the customary 'Speedy' bonus.★



» [GBA] While the game design remained faithful, the GBA lacked the power to faithfully recreate *Crazy Taxi*.



» [iOS] Leaping over traffic remains a key part of the gameplay experience in *Crazy Taxi: City Rush*.



» [iOS] The more overtly cartoonish visual style of *City Rush* marks a break from the rest of the series.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Wizball

» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS » **DEVELOPER:** SENSIBLE SOFTWARE » **RELEASED:** 1987

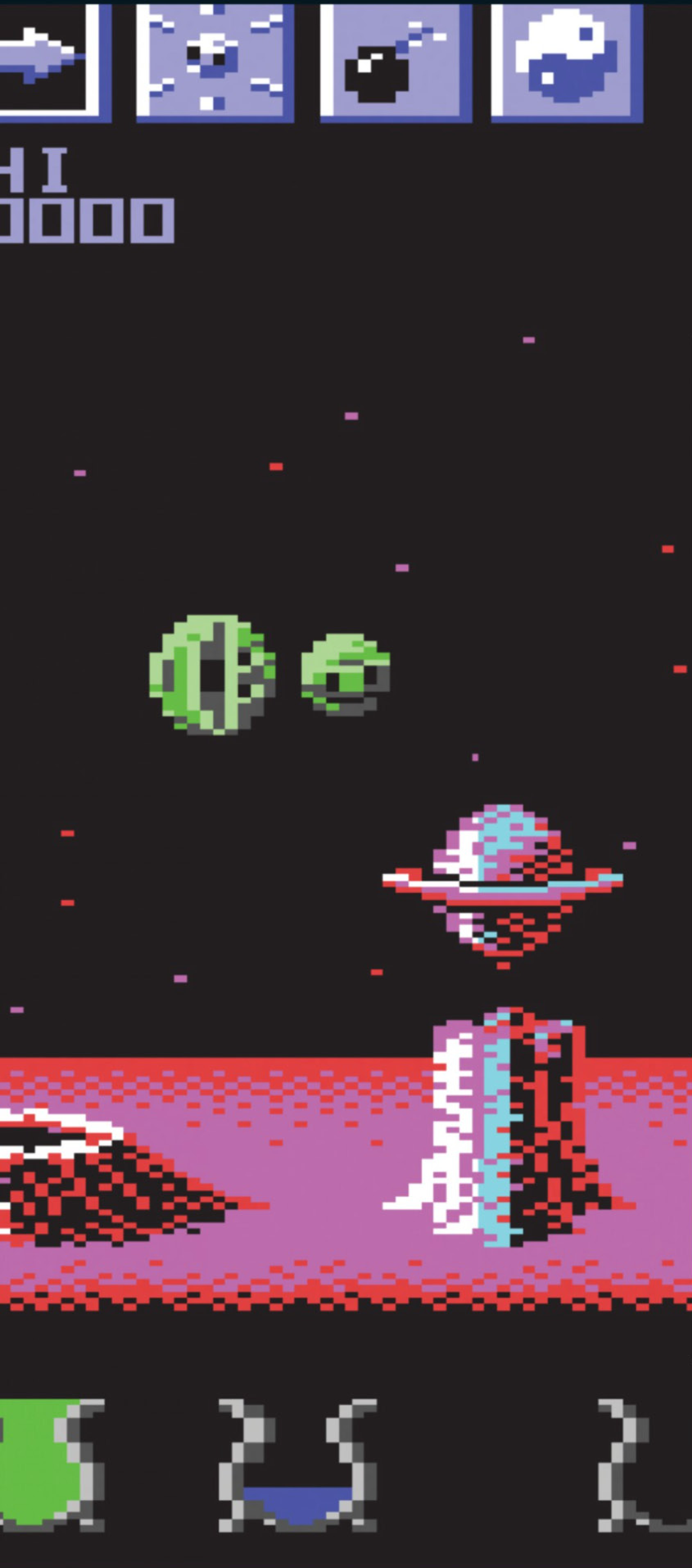
How best to describe *Wizball*, voted Game of the Decade by *Zzap!64* magazine? Imagine a cross between a *Gradius*-style shoot-'em-up, scrolling horizontally left and right, with painting by numbers. The evil wizard Zark has drained all the colours from Wizworld, so it is up to our wizard in his bouncing green ball to restore them one at a time.

This specially created screenshot shows how Level 1 gradually regains its colour. First comes red, then purple (created by mixing red and blue) and finally cyan (blue and green). To collect the colour droplets requires the wizard's pet cat Nifta in its 'Catelite' – a small ship that can be controlled by the player holding down fire, or by a second player in the cooperative two-player team mode.

Some people struggle with the controls and initial difficulty, but perseverance is worth it. The Commodore 64 version (using the 'sprites in the border' hardware trick to give a bigger playing area) is the original and best way to sample this unusual and colourful game. *

BIO

Ocean had published the first Sensible Software creation, the smooth-scrolling *Parallax*. The publisher would also be responsible for porting *Wizball* to multiple formats; Peter Johnson coded the 16-bit versions while the Spectrum graphics came from newcomer Mark R Jones. Wiz would return for the sequel *Wizkid*, an unusual combination of *Arkanoid*-style gameplay and an arcade adventure. The game had perhaps one of the most bizarre endings of all time and marked the end of Sensible's relationship with Ocean as publisher. In 2007 Graham Goring published his PC remake of the original *Wizball* that is well worth tracking down.



MORE CLASSIC WIZBALL MOMENTS

Precious Pearl



Starting can be tricky as the Wizball bounces, with only left and right spin to control it. Shooting the green monsters releases green pearls that can be used to upgrade the weaponry. First step is collecting Thrust and Antigrav (which cost one pearl each) to give more control. Three pearls are needed to bring in the vital Catelite, used for collecting the colour droplets.

Colouring In



In a brief pause from the action, Wiz mixes the colour and chooses a permanent weapon while his cat has a saucer of milk. Each level requires three mixed colours, with three of the eight levels (one red, one green, one blue) populated by enemies at one time – completing Level 1 opens up Level 4, and so on. Look out for a surprise appearance from Mount Rushmore on Level 3.

Caught By The Fuzz



As well as the red, green and blue droplets used to mix colours, other colour drops appear. Light blue launches the 'filth raid', a wave of fast-moving police ships that is difficult to survive. A grey drop makes the Catelite indestructible, purple makes the Catelite uncontrollable, black makes the landscape invisible and the rare white drop awards an extra life.

Game Over, Man!



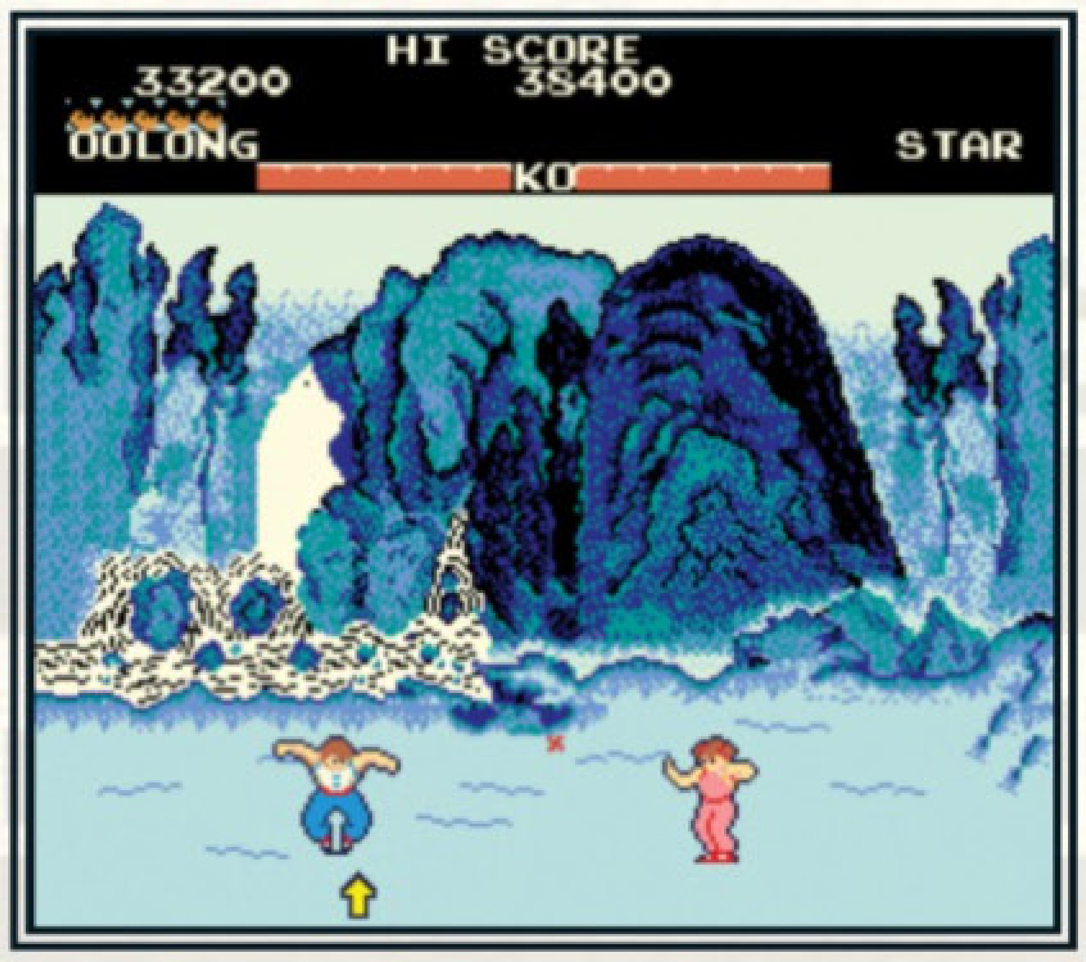
A colourful explosion and a guitar solo mark the player's demise. Martin Galway programmed the C64 music and sound effects, with inspiration from Chris Yates and Jon Hare (who used to play in a band together). Chris created the guitar solo, while Jon laid down the bass riffs that accompany the bonus bit (as Wiz warps to his lab, shooting waves of enemies for bonus points).

YIE AR KUNG-FU



When Konami unleashed its arcade brawler 1985, it created a template for the raft of fighters that followed. Darran Jones looks back to a time when everybody was kung fu fighting

» [Arcade] Interestingly, only the female characters use projectile weapons to fight Oolong.



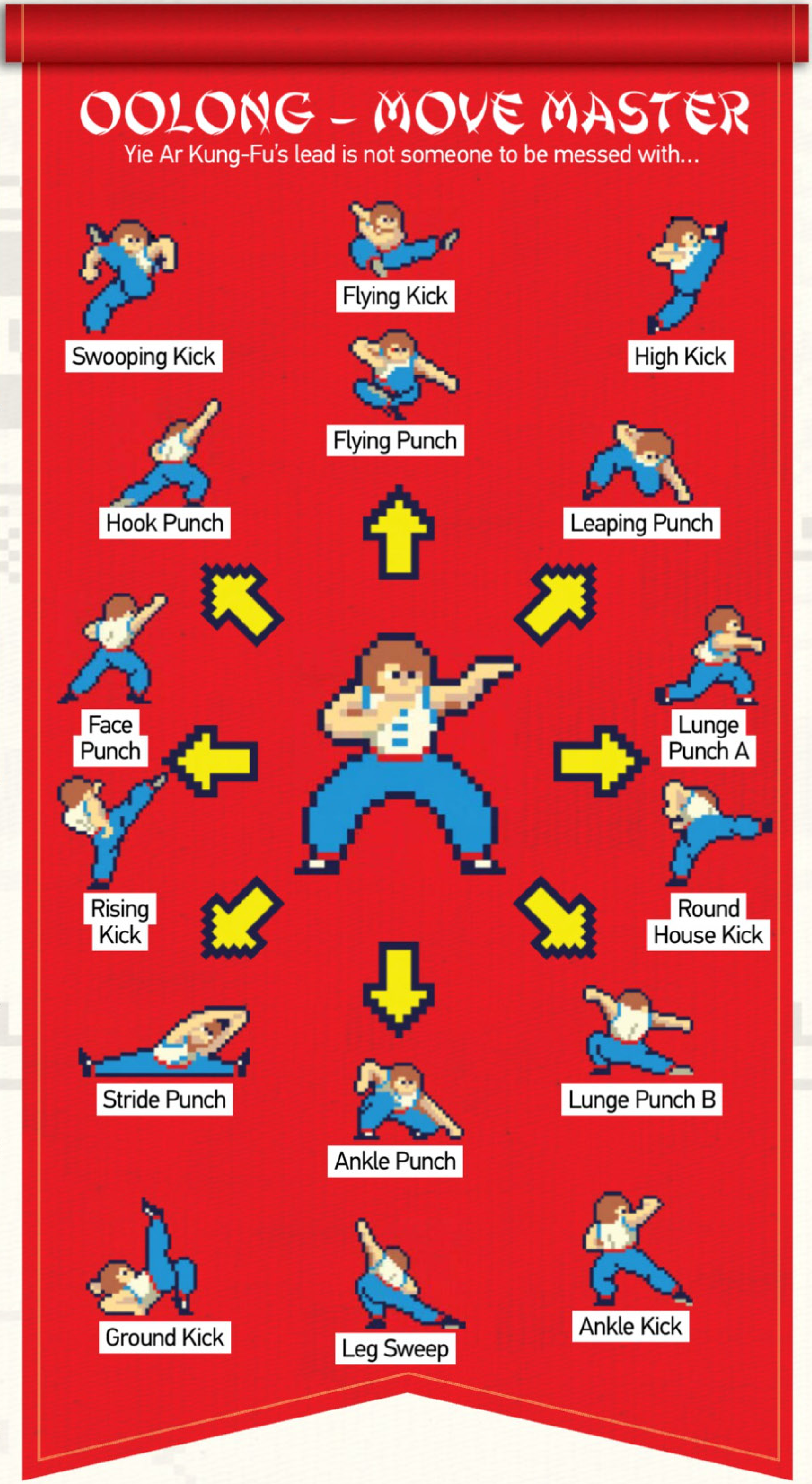
» [Arcade] There are only two different stages in the arcade version; a waterfall and the dojo shown here.



Street Fighter, Tekken and SoulCalibur are three of the largest fighting franchises around, having secured millions of pounds in revenue and driven the genre forward in their own unique ways. Interestingly however, neither Capcom nor Namco were responsible for the fighting craze that first exploded in the early Eighties.

While the DNA of the modern one-on-one fighter can arguably be traced back to Technos' *Karate Champ*, it was the work of another Japanese developer that created many of the innovations that are still felt in today's modern brawlers. That game was *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*, and the company behind it was Konami. The irony won't be lost on many gamers. After all, everyone remembers *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*, but how many of you can recall Konami's later fighting efforts like *Dragoon Might*, *Martial Champion* or *Battle Tryst*? Not many we'd wager. The innovation found in *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* was lightning in a bottle and the developer never again led the fighting scene like it did in the very early Eighties.

The likes of *Karate Champ* and *Way Of The Exploding Fists* were big leaps forward for the genre, but it was Konami's game that shook it up and made it feel fresh and exciting. Karate was the biggest inspiration for many early games with titles like the aforementioned releases being grounded in realism and based on traditional point scoring that was used to settle most matches the world over. *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* went one better than this, introducing the world to the energy bar, a system that would allow you to ▶





» [Arcade] Club's shield is great at blocking your attacks, so mix things up a bit when fighting him.

absorb eight blows before your winded fighter wound up on his back with his legs comically twitching in the air like a grounded salmon. A story could also be found at the heart of Konami's game. Admittedly it was the flimsiest plot since Miner Willy woke up with a hangover in *Jet Set Willy*, but it was there and did allow you to relate that little bit more to lead character Oolong. Oolong (who looks suspiciously similar to Bruce Lee in both the Japanese and US flyers) has decided to face off against 11 deadly opponents. It's a good old-fashioned tale of revenge, as his father died while attempting a similar battle for supremacy.

If *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*'s plot was trite, the same couldn't be said for the 11 rivals that you fought against. Konami's game borrowed heavily from popular action films of the Seventies and Eighties, with larger than life opponents that were full of character compared to the rather dull combatants found in similar games of the time. While a few were alleged to have been based on real-life fighters, each and every one was memorable thanks to their distinctive cartoon-like appearance – another aspect that helped to separate Konami's game from its peers – oh, and the fact that most of them carried weapons.

While other brawlers were content to have you battling mano-a-mano, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* typically had you facing off against a number of heavily armed opponents. Clubs, chains, nunchaku and throwing stars were just a few of the weapons you encountered, and each and every one required different tactics to defeat. Thrown weapons like fans and throwing stars could be fired at Oolong from the opposite side of the screen, while weapons like the pole, sword and chain had tremendous reach that could also cause problems for inexperienced players. Thank goodness then that Oolong was as agile as a gazelle.

Though he lacked special moves, Oolong was far from defenceless, having 16 different moves spread across kicks and punches. Moves were activated by pressing either the punch or kick button and selecting one of eight directions on the joystick, allowing Oolong access to a deadly repertoire of lunge punches, flying kicks and fists to the face. It's certainly stiff and ungainly compared to today's modern fighters, but back then it was a revelation, building on the similar systems found in earlier games, but making everything feel that little bit more exciting and fluid. Although certain moves looked like Oolong could block attacks, he was actually rather defenceless, relying instead on a strong offence to get him through each new round. While careful timing could allow him to

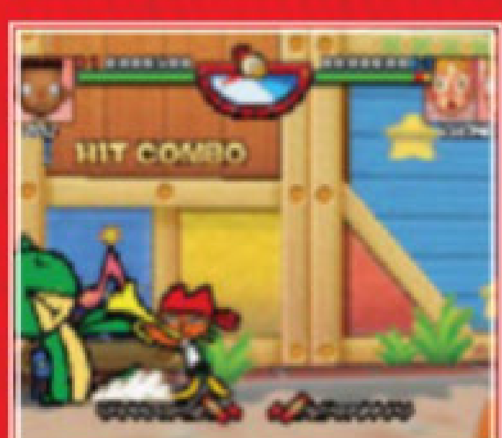
"The flimsiest plot since Miner Willy woke up with a hangover"

"I KNOW KUNG FU" Konami's range of brawlers is interesting to say the least...



Galactic Warriors

Robots battling against each other sounds like an amazing idea for a game, but that was also the premise of *Rise Of The Robots* and look how that turned out. This is a similarly terrible game with woeful animation, clunky controls and uninspired character design.



Rakuga Kids

This N64 exclusive is best known for its unique and distinctive art-style. Everything looks like a drawing that's come to life, giving *Rakuga Kids* a very memorable look. It also helps that the one-on-one fighting is pretty similar in style to the energetic *Marvel Vs Capcom* games.



Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Tournament Fighters

Konami's *Turtles* games were typically scrolling fighters, so *Tournament Fighters* was a nice change of pace. It's a solid scrapper with plenty of recognisable characters from the comics and some tough bosses.



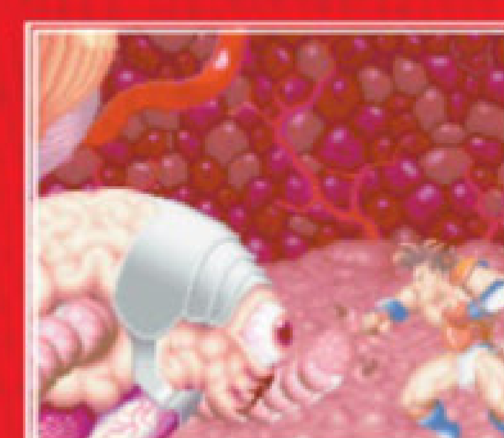
Martial Champion

Konami jumped on the *Street Fighter* bandwagon with this interesting brawler. It's notable for having a similar fighting style to *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* (using high, low and medium attacks) and the ability to disarm characters and use their weapons against them.



Dragoon Master

A gorgeous looking 2D brawler from Konami that plays like a cross between *The Last Blade* and *The King Of Fighters* franchises. In addition to its notably slick character animations it's also possible to swing off certain objects like tree branches and pipes to avoid certain attacks.



Monster Maulers

Now this is rather splendid. *Monster Maulers* appears to be a traditional fighting game, but it's one where you duff up an increasingly bizarre range of monsters. Best of all you get to smack Brainy from *Salamander* in his eye and go fist-to-face with the giant heads from *Gradius*.



BRIAN BEUKEN

Discover how Brian oversaw the Spectrum and Amstrad conversions



How did your team get to work on the project?
We drove down to Manchester for a meeting with David Ward, and a short time later we got a call asking us if we could port *Yie Ar* to ZX Spectrum, Amstrad and C64. Of course we said yes.

As production got underway the Amstrad and Speccy versions progressed really well but the C64 was struggling due to the size of the graphics and the programmer's inability to get a decent multiplexer working. Then all the games had problems with memory, as we really couldn't fit everything in.

My Assembly coding had improved well enough to get involved, so I started working on compression-based sprite systems which could decode on the fly, a form of early RLL compression. It worked well for Amstrad and I wrote similar systems for the Spectrum. The C64 version ground to a halt, and after discussion Ocean decided to take it in-house, and Dave Collier took it on.

Did you work on the improved Spectrum 128K version?
Later after we had done the project I was invited down to Ocean to do the Spectrum 128 version myself, which I was very excited to do. It meant leaving my little village in Scotland and moving to the big city to work but it was such a massive opportunity I couldn't turn it down so I moved, and that really started my 30-year career as a professional game coder.

Had you had much experience with the game before?
Nope. Never heard of it before we started it.

What support did you receive – if any – from original *Yie Ar* developer Konami?
None… I worked direct for Ocean/Imagine who basically gave me yes/no feedback. I rented the arcade game (I think Ocean agreed to pay for it) and played it to death. We were pretty much left to get on with it. You must remember this was pre-internet days, so we'd send a cassette down to them every few weeks to ensure we were on track, and as long as we were progressing towards the deadline they were happy. The only concern from them was the C64 which clearly was not working out, so the development manager at the time, Colin Stokes, came up Scotland to assess the projects and made the decision to take the C64 version in-house but he was happy with the other versions.

How did you manage to balance the difficulty between the different characters?
The AI was pretty simple, and mostly worked on a ranging system with a random or timed choice with some clear offence and defence reaction moves. Different characters were biased towards ranged or melee attacks and their response speed was reduced to create difficulty. Back then we didn't have the luxury of memory or CPU power to do much more than that.

What were the differences between the 48 and 128K versions of the game?
Mostly graphical, the 48K has a multiload version, the 128 kept it all in memory, so some characters we dropped were included, also on a technical level the 128K had a double-buffered screen system making it much smoother and faster. Code was totally different and quite modular compared to the 48K and the key controls were optimised with a toggle switch to choose kick and punch.

CONVERSION CAPERS

We look at the best and worst conversions of Konami's popular beat-'em-up



NES
The NES version is very different to the arcade original. There are only five fighters available, and one called Tao is completely new, with the ability to shoot fireballs. Oolong is now called Lee for some reason and his moves list is greatly diminished.



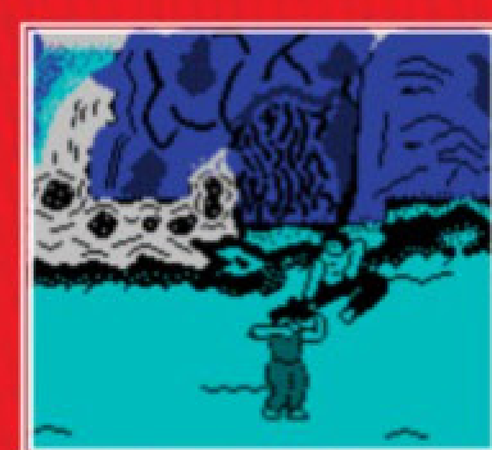
MSX
This version is similar in several ways to the NES outing, but the Lee sprite has been given an oddly childlike makeover. The overly simple one-button control system also means that it suffers compared to the far more responsive NES outing.



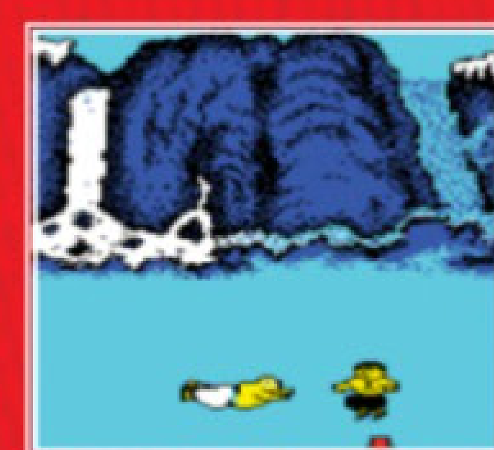
Amstrad CPC
The CPC version is the best looking 8-bit outing with bright cartoony sprites that perfectly capture the arcade originals. It's a little sluggish compared to some of its peers though and omits Feedle and Fan. It also has the same control issues as the Spectrum.



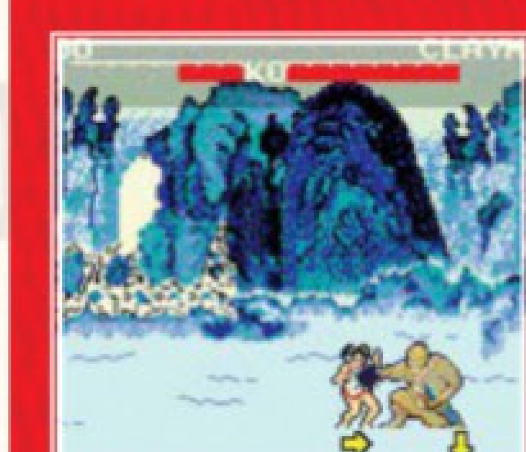
Commodore 64
There are two versions, but seem identical aside from loading screens and title music. They play at an extremely nippy pace, but we're not big fans of the more realistic looking visuals. Only Feedle is missing from the roster.



ZX Spectrum
Like many of the 8-bit ports, the lack of a single fire button makes things a little clunky, but this is an otherwise great little conversion that's only missing Feedle and Chain. Brian's Spectrum 128K version is even better.



BBC Micro
The graphical style is nice and it maintains the speed of the C64 version. It's more intense too, with no pauses between matches. Club and Tunfun are omitted and Feedle has become a bonus section where you hit different flying objects.



Game Boy Advance
Like many of the later versions, the GBA outing is virtually arcade perfect. It goes one better, however, by introducing a brand new backdrop and two new combatants in the two-player link-up mode.



Xbox Live Arcade
Like many of the later ports that arrived on various compilations, the Xbox 360 version is arcade perfect. It has the added bonus of Achievements and playing online as well and was also available on the ill-fated Game Room service.



» [Arcade] There's a point system used in *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* with the player earning more points for difficult strikes.

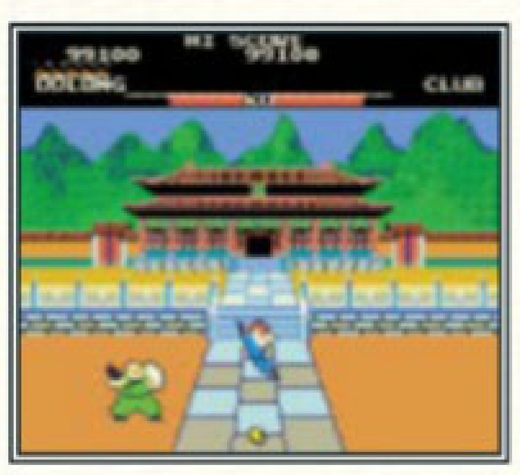


stop incoming projectiles, Oolong's best defence was to leap into the air to avoid incoming attacks. The exaggerated jumps were another nod to the many Kung Fu flicks that Konami's game had been inspired by, but also proved to be a good way of flummoxing certain enemies, allowing Oolong to get in a few sneaky hits against his male and female opponents.

In another first for the genre, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* actually allowed you to scrap against two female opponents, the imaginatively-named Star, who was deadly with throwing stars, and Fan, who predictably liked to chuck steel fans at Oolong. Unlike their male peers, defeated females would simply slump to the floor upon losing, being far too ladylike to show their bottoms. They were otherwise just as strong as their male comrades, being more than capable of kicking Oolong's arse, particularly Fan, who was one of the last opponents that Oolong faced. It's a pity then that for all its innovations Konami saddled its fighters with such bland, forgettable names. Everyone aside from Feedle, Buchu and Blues are named after the weapons they carry, making their monikers one of the only bland aspects of Konami's superb game.

Otherwise *Yie Ar Kung-Fu* was everything you'd expect from a premier arcade game. It boasted excellent visuals, a delightful tune that stayed just the right side of irritating and responsive controls. Its success in arcades led to numerous home ports of varying quality, and covered a variety of systems, from the MSX and ZX Spectrum to Nintendo's NES. An inevitable sequel, *Yie Ar Kung-Fu II*, arrived in 1986, but interestingly Konami opted to turn it into a side-scrolling fighter. It also failed to reach the inside of arcades, being originally developed for the MSX, before being ported to other systems, once again courtesy of Imagine Software.

Yie Ar Kung Fu's own success might have stopped virtually as soon as it started, but it has left a legacy behind that many other brawlers should be envious of.



» [Arcade] This move is very effective, allowing you to dash forwards.



» [Arcade] Feedle effectively acts as a bonus round.

WELCOME TO THE DOJO

11 deadly adversaries stand between you and ultimate victory. Here's how to defeat them...

Buchu



The first fighter Oolong faces off against is an intimidating one. He may not have any weapons, but his sheer size and grace can make him a difficult foe to deal with. He's apparently modelled on wrestler Abdullah The Butcher, and specialises in Sumo wrestling, but we've never seen a Sumo warrior fly gracefully through the air. Well, not a real one anyway.

How to beat him

Avoid his flying attacks and bide your time. Your best bet is to wait for him to land and get in some quick leg sweeps. While he's a relatively easy foe to beat once you know what you're doing, he can pin you with some nasty flurries.

Difficulty 1

Star



Star is notable for being one of the first female characters to ever appear in a fighting game. Don't let her demure femininity fool you however, as she's deadly with her throwing stars and fights just as viciously as her male peers. She doesn't appear to be based upon any notable figures, but does have some lightning fast attacks.

How to beat her

If you want to show off, it's possible to deflect her throwing stars. If you're not feeling confident your best course of action is to simply duck at the correct moment or use moves like the High Kick to glitch through them. Jumps are the key to success here, so time your landings correctly.

Difficulty 3

Nuncha

This is where the difficulty of Konami's game ramps up, as Nuncha is the first of many characters to use a weapon that allows him decent reach. Resplendent in his yellow gi, he instantly reminds you of Bruce Lee's iconic turn in the ill-fated *The Game Of Death*. He's nowhere near as graceful mind, and is more interested in hitting you in the chops rather than pulling off any fancy moves.

How to beat him

Timing is everything when fighting Nuncha. He at first appears to be a difficult opponent to read, but you soon realise that his elaborate nunchuck swinging signifies he's getting ready to attack. Hit him while he's jumping around and then jump out of his way. He can quickly combo strikes, so don't stay close to him.

Difficulty 5



Pole

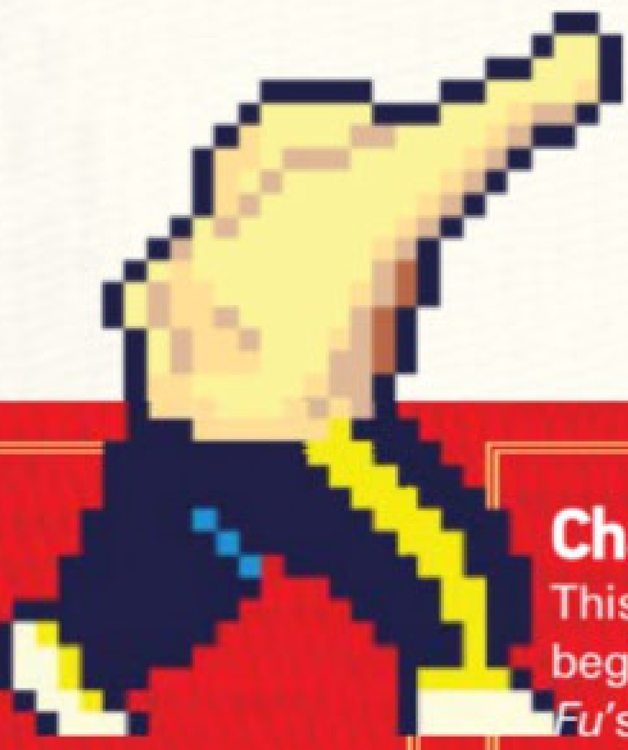


Don't be fooled by his large size, as Pole is a surprisingly agile fellow who is extremely quick on his feet. Not only does his weapon allow him to reach even further than Nuncha, he can also use a Pole Vault to add some much-needed momentum to his attacks. In short he's a dangerous fellow that shouldn't ever be underestimated.

How to beat him

You'll need to try and second-guess Pole as he's always on the move and can be quite a difficult character to read. Try and leap forward to where you think he will be and then get in a few low sweeps or a sneaky roundhouse kick. Like Nuncha he has some devastatingly quick attacks, so don't dilly-dally or you'll be quickly punished by this difficult opponent.

Difficulty 7



Feedle

Every fighting game needs a bonus round and this is essentially *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*'s. It's not really clear if Feedle has lots of identical siblings, or is a master ninja. What is clear however is that there are a lot of copies of him who will constantly attack you. He doesn't have weapons, but does have sheer numbers on his side.

How to beat him

A cool head is the key to kicking Feedle's ass. He'll typically be dispatched with a single attack, so use one that will keep him as far away from you as possible. He approaches you from both sides of the screen so don't jump because his numerous clones/ siblings will easily swamp you).

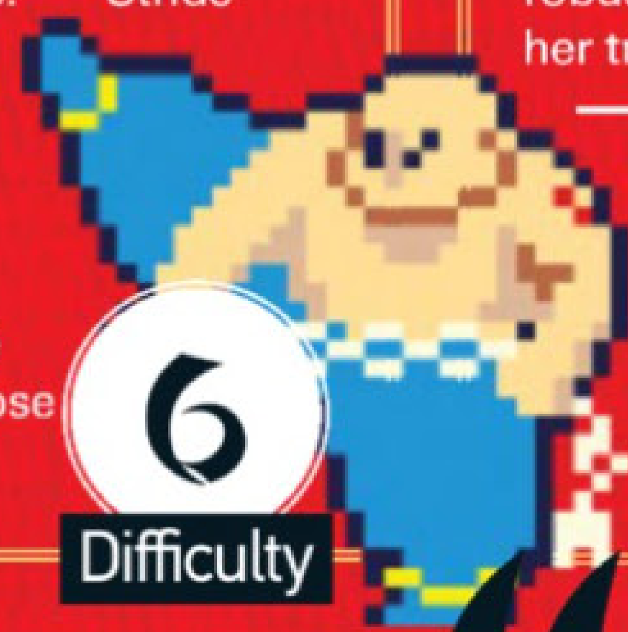
5 Difficulty

Chain

This large foe marks the beginning of *Yie Ar Kung-Fu*'s next wave of generally far tougher enemies. He waits for you at the beginning of the temple stage, taunting you with his rippling muscles and insanely dangerous chain. He has the greatest reach in the game and will punish you.

How to beat him

Try praying. If that doesn't work you might want to keep your distance and wait for small openings to attack. His chain can hit you on the back swing, so you need to be on your game. Stride and Lunge Punches help here. It's a battle of attrition though, so be prepared to lose a few lives.



6 Difficulty



Club

Club is an interesting character as he's the first one you encounter who takes a strong defensive stance. While he's not especially powerful compared to some of his peers, his shield will constantly block your attacks, potentially leaving you open to dangerous counterattacks. He's otherwise quite similar to Buchu in terms of size and looks.

6 Difficulty

How to beat him

While Club is quite strong on defence it's still relatively easy to disorientate him. He'll block many of your frontal assaults, meaning you'll need to constantly leap over him to catch him unawares.



Fan

Fan is the second and final female opponent that Oolong will face. While she's a lot sleeker and less robust than Star, she has deadly steel fans that give her tremendous reach and double up as useful shields.

How to beat her

While you can punch and kick the fans, it's a lot trickier compared to Star's throwing stars. They can also home in on you, making things even more difficult. Try and glitch through her attacks with your High Kick, or leap in for a few crafty low kicks.

7 Difficulty

> **He's a sod to fight, leaping around like a jack-in-the-box**

Sword

Although Sword's Dao doesn't have the ability to cleave Oolong in two, he's still not to be messed with. Apart from Blues and Tonfun, he's easily the most athletic foe you'll encounter and will quickly run circles around you if you give him any ground. He looks like a masked ninja and is easily the coolest looking enemy you face.



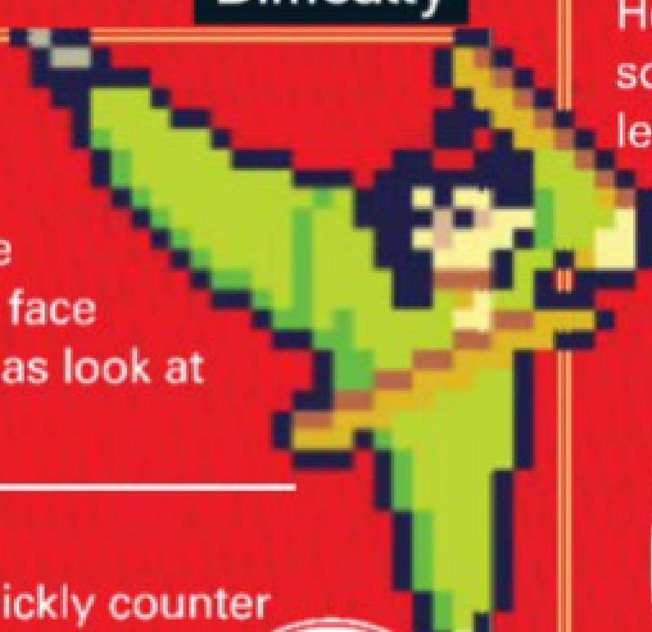
How to beat him

Leaping around is the key to success here, because Sword is nearly as fast as you are. He can catch you out with sneaky high thrust, but he's otherwise a relatively easy enemy to beat, as his long lunges are easy to spot.

8 Difficulty

Tonfun

If you squint really hard Tonfun looks a bit like legendary martial artist Sammo Hung. Alongside Blues he's the most intimidating opponent you'll face and will make mincemeat of you if you so much as look at him funny. Don't mention the bow in his hair…



How to beat him

Try not to chain your attacks together, as he'll quickly counter them and cause you a mischief. Stay in the middle of the screen as well, as you'll be quickly rushed and pinned down. You'll need a little luck to beat Tonfun, but forward leaps and sneaky back kicks will also help.

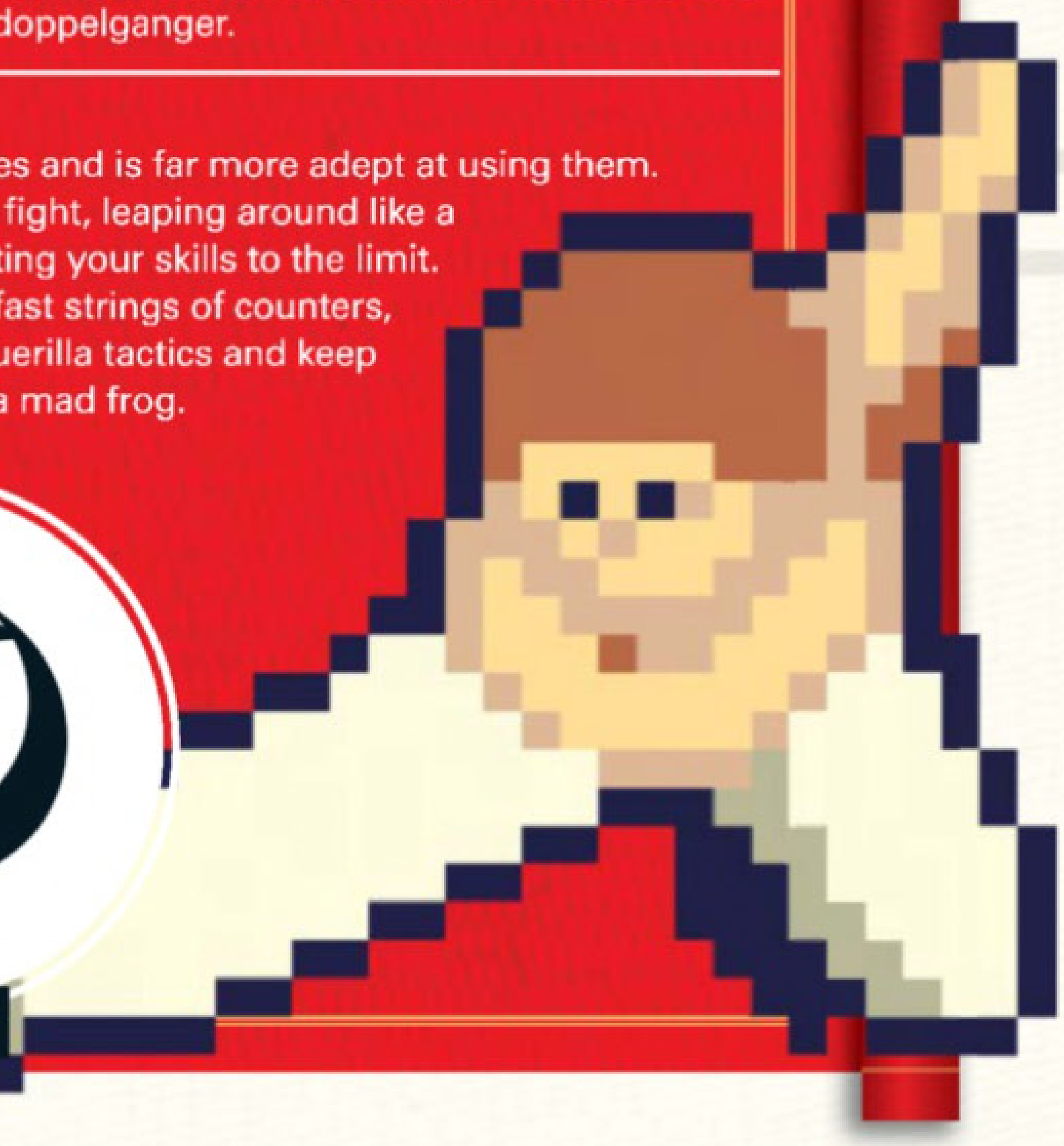
9 Difficulty

Blues

Is Blues Konami's version of Bruce Lee? It's hard to say for sure. Konami, like many developers of the time never had problems using reproductions of famous people in its games, but as Blues is a mirror image of Oolong, we'd wager that Oolong is Bruce Lee and Blues is in fact his evil doppelganger.

How to beat him

Blues has all your moves and is far more adept at using them. He's a complete sod to fight, leaping around like a jack-in-the-box and testing your skills to the limit. He's amazing at doing fast strings of counters, so you'll need to use guerilla tactics and keep leaping in and out like a mad frog.



10 Difficulty

Minority Report

Often unfairly overlooked in favour of its bigger brother, the VIC-20 was host to a wealth of interesting, engaging and diverse games that covered a wide variety of different genres. Mat Allen takes a closer look at some of those that deserve greater attention





» [VIC-20] Waka waka waka waka!

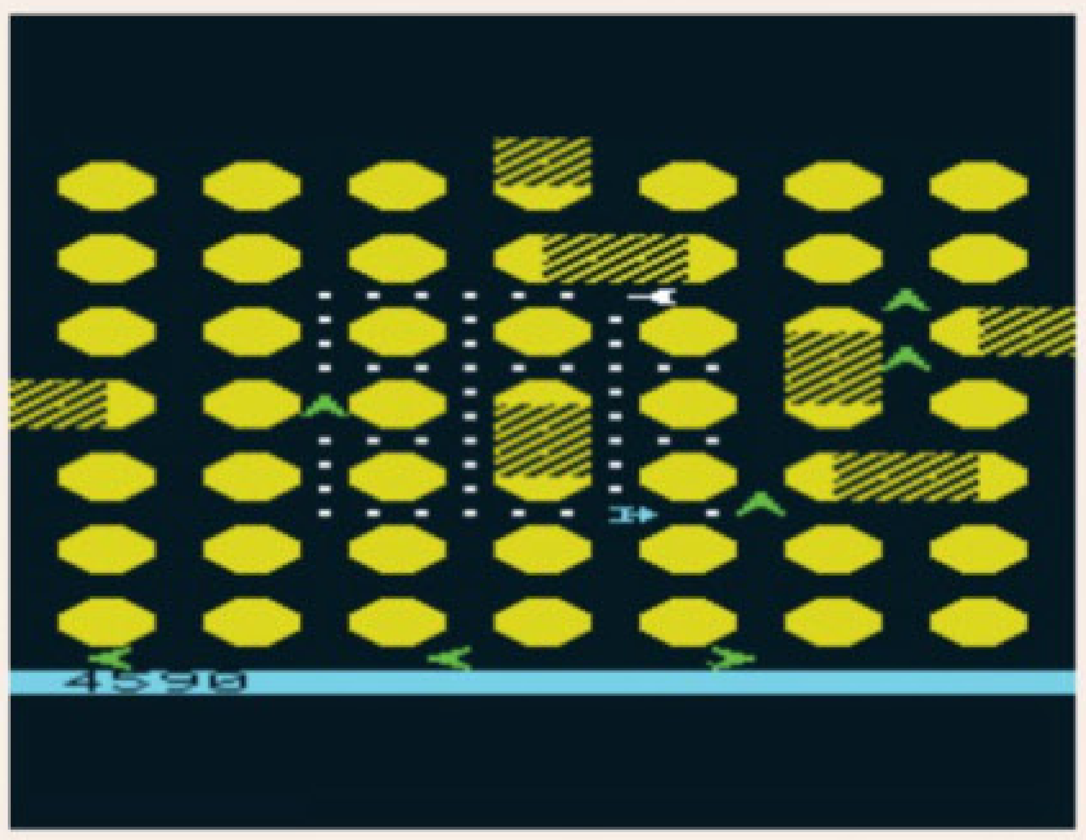
JELLY MONSTERS

■ DEVELOPER: COMMODORE ■ YEAR: 1981

■ **Or should that be *Pac-Man*? Let us tell you a story… once upon a time there was a company called Commodore that was looking to release a new computer and software in Japan.** As part of this scope, it chose to license some popular arcade games of the day from Namco (*Pac-Man*, *Galaxian* and *Rally-X*) and produce home versions. Problems only arose when Commodore later tried to release the games in the West; the licence only applied to Japan, and the home rights for them were already held by other different companies.

In *Pac-Man*'s case, that was Atari. Despite the name change to *Jelly Monsters*, Commodore was not the only company that Atari went after for potentially infringing the look and feel of what it considered a prize asset. Philip's game *Munchkin* for the Odyssey is probably the most well known, but other targets included *Polecat* for the Acorn Atom by A 'n F Software.

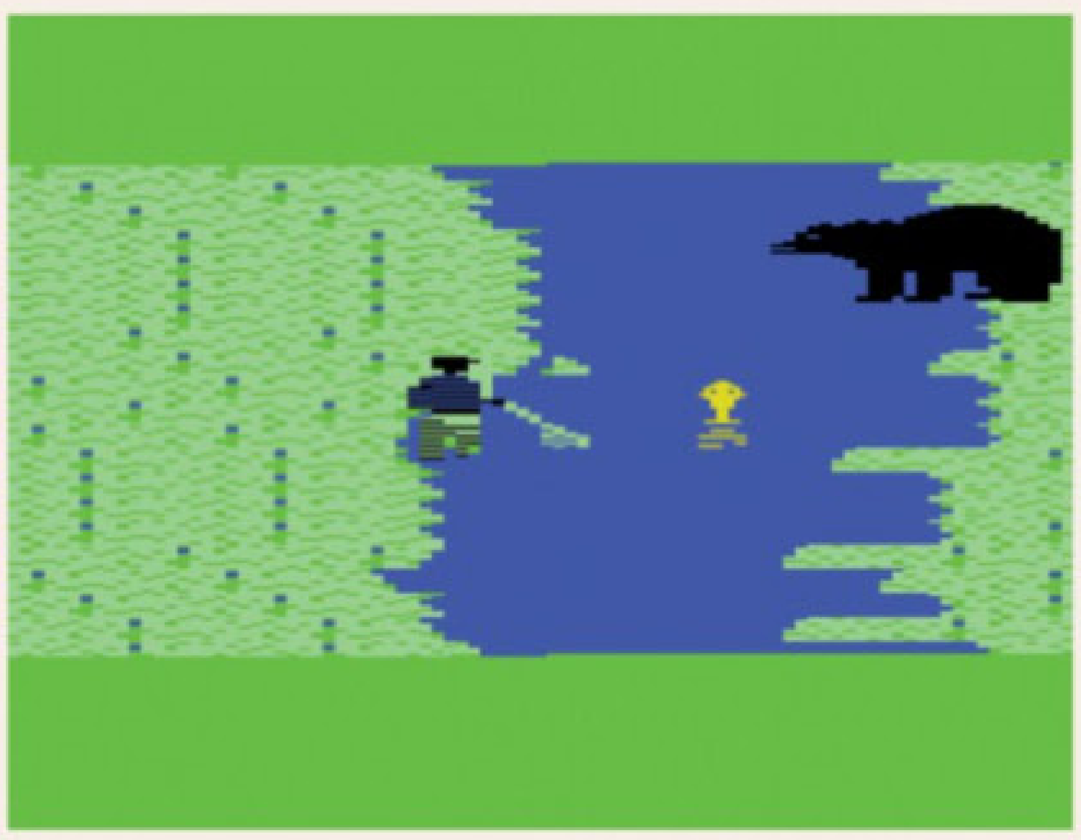
Many people call *Jelly Monsters* a *Pac-Man* clone, when the evidence all points to the fact it was an official conversion. What is in as much dispute is where the game was programmed. Logic would suggest HAL Labs in Japan, given this is where *Rally-X* and *Galaxian*



» MOBILE ATTACK

■ DEVELOPER: MSD INC ■ YEAR: 1982

■ **Take one developer** so obscure that no one has heard of it, a cartridge so large it could be used as a murder weapon and more than a passing nod to the arcade game *Spectar*, and you get *Mobile Attack*. The sequel to *Targ* added a few new mechanics to the general gameplay, including enemies that shoot at you and the ability to finish the round by collecting all the dots in the maze instead of killing every enemy, although the AI isn't quite as intelligent as before. All of this is reflected in a game with excellent controls, workmanlike graphics and a reasonably steep difficulty curve, that rewards repeated play and increasing your skill level.



» SALMON RUN

■ DEVELOPER: SYNAPSE SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **It's the call** of the wild. Sammy Salmon the seafaring swimmer is back. He's back from sea trying to reach his fishy fiancée upstream. *Salmon Run* is a strange, fishy version of *River Raid* in a way, as your task is to get as far upstream as possible while avoiding all the hazards, but it's one that is oddly compelling and playable. Bears will try to swipe you from the banks, anglers aim to catch you and birds fly overhead waiting to pounce. *Salmon Run* starts fairly slow but soon speeds up, with the simple controls and aim belying a good difficulty curve and that you only get one life per game. Don't just sit there, start swimming!



» COSMIC FIREBIRDS

■ DEVELOPER: SOLAR SOFTWARE ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Coming through as** a cross between *Galaga* and *Phoenix*, *Cosmic Firebirds* is another perfect example of the early Eighties home computer game philosophy to make something that looks and plays similar to the arcade, with a similar level of difficulty attached. Games *were* harder back then! You are thrown into matters instantly as swirling formations of alien birds dive and attack, as you do your best to survive as long as possible and maybe shoot some of them in the process. Despite how hard the game is, there is a strange degree of replayability present in a vague masochistic sense, and improving skill definitely rewards further progress.



» [VIC-20] Turning the tables on your ghostly enemies in style.



» [VIC-20] Going uptown at the start of level two. Waiter, where's my cream and sugar?



» Proof from a Japanese auction that the game exists on cartridge.

were written (the latter programmed by the-now head of Nintendo, Satoru Iwata), but there are hints it could have been Handic in Sweden. The fact it was the UK division of Commodore that was sued by Atari, and not the main US office, merely adds fuel to the fire. Sadly there are no hints in the hex to prove conclusively one way or the other.

After all that, what is the game actually like? The first thing that strikes you is that despite the switch of orientation, the maze is almost the same as the arcade's, with big, colourful, emotive sprites roaming the corridors. Sure, they flicker a bit and some of the colours are different, but it's a far better effort than Todd Frye was allowed on the Atari 2600, for example. All the arcade jingles and sound effects are present and highly accurate to their source, with many of the same mechanics and possibility for patterns included. No wonder Atari felt threatened.

Upon playing *Jelly Monsters* for a while, the other striking aspect is just how hard it is, arguably more so than the original arcade game. The ghost AI can be harsh and unrelenting at times, although true to its arcade parent, there are moments when the ghosts suddenly change direction and run away from you instead. Clearing a screen without losing a life is not an easy task, especially when trying to maximise point revenue from eating the ghosts. If you like a challenge, then this is definitely a game to be considered.

In the end, most likely as a 'just in case' outcome, the game was redesigned and published as *Cosmic Cruncher* the following year, but it is a much inferior effort.



» ABOUT VIC-20

- The computer was developed to counter the growing Japanese market, and was launched first in Japan in 1980 as the VIC-1001.
- It was the first home computer to sell 1 million units, just pipping the Apple II to the accolade.
- Despite being superseded by the C64 in 1982, the machine and games remained commercially available until 1986, with a thriving homebrew scene operating today.



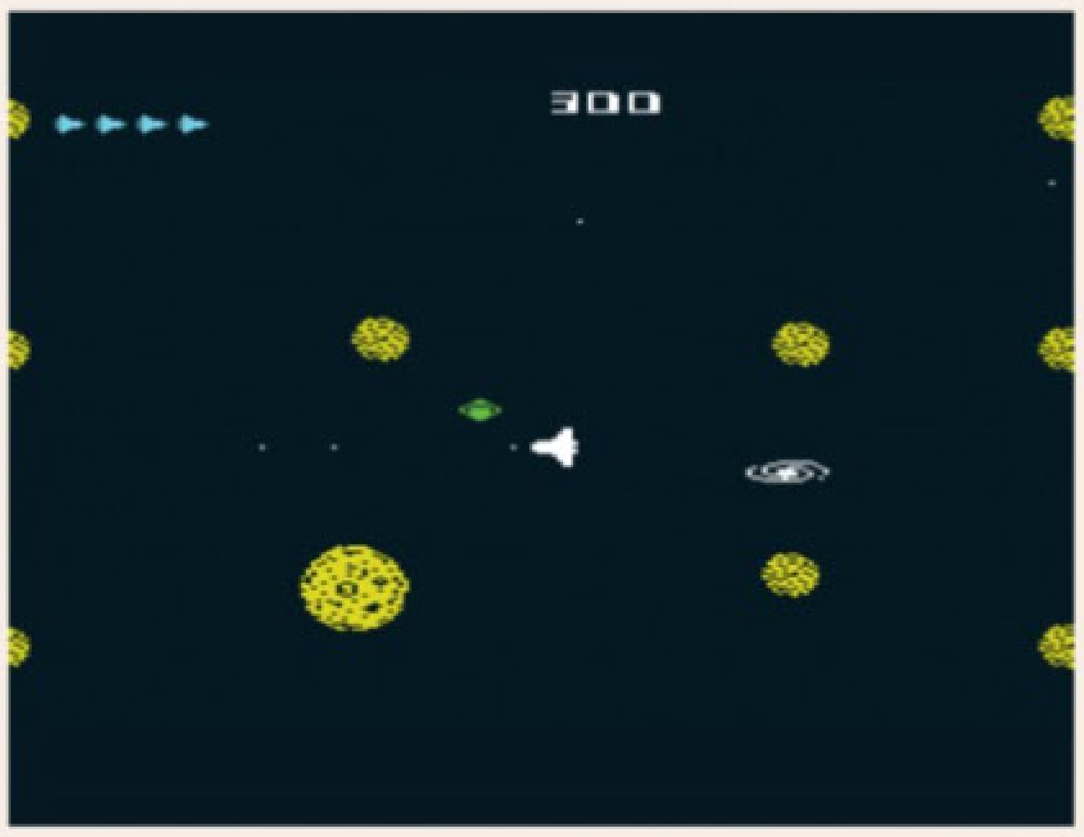
» [VIC-20] Run Pac-Man, run, before the ghost monster gets you!



» LODE RUNNER

■ DEVELOPER: BRØDERBUND ■ YEAR: 1983

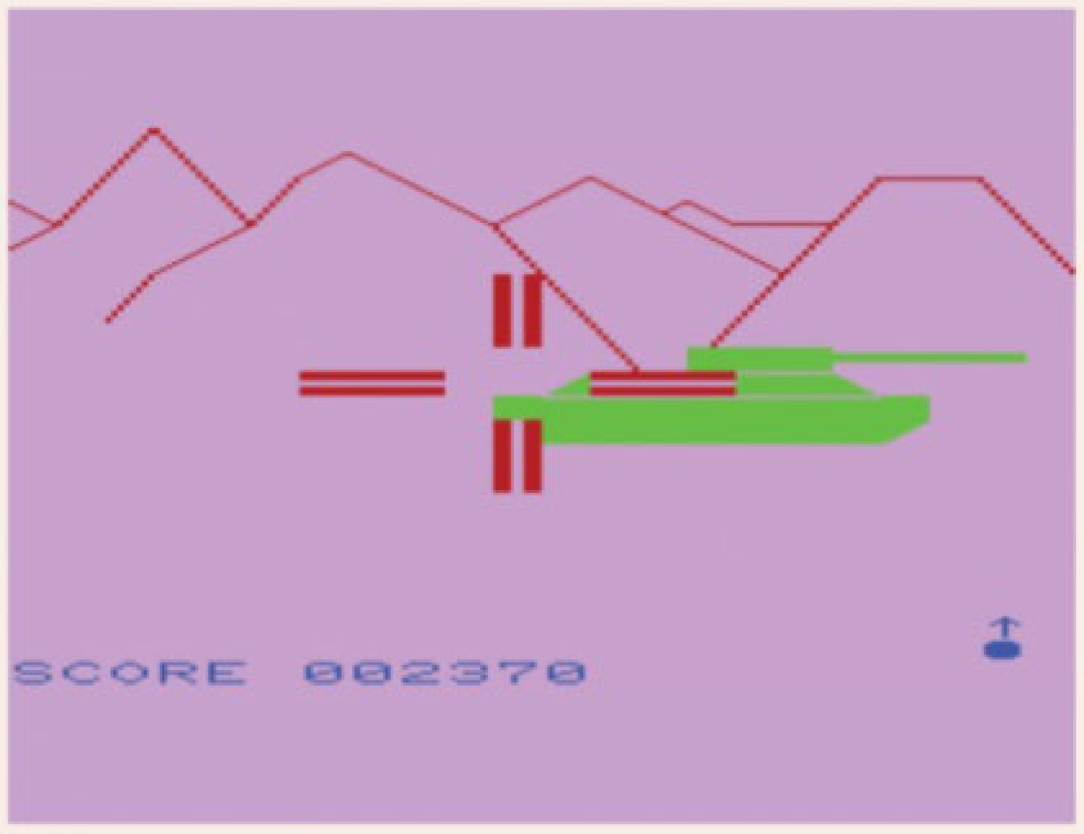
■ **For the small** proportion of people who have not heard of this game, your task as a galactic commando is to infiltrate the 24 levels of the Bungeling Empire and steal back all the gold that it has taken from the populace. Armed only with a drill gun, you must avoid or trap the guards on the way before escaping. The VIC-20 version of this popular classic plays extremely well, with responsive controls and devious screen layouts, guaranteed to infuriate the hell out of you. The minimalistic graphics and sound add a charm to proceedings, and the package is rounded off by also including the screen designer to boot.



» MOONS OF JUPITER

■ DEVELOPER: ROMIK ■ YEAR: 1994

■ **You are the** commander of a fleet of destroyers. Looking on from the safety of the mothership, you send in one destroyer at a time to blast a passage through the moons of Jupiter. What this means in reality is another *Asteroids* clone, though it should be filed under the same hard banner as *Cosmic Firebirds*. No wave or two to get familiar with the controls and mechanisms – it's full-on, in-your-face action as the computer sends several rocks hurtling all over the screen from the off. It's an impressive programming accomplishment for this level of smoothness and speed, coupled with impressive responsiveness from the controls.



» TANK ATAK

■ DEVELOPER: SUPERSOFT ■ YEAR: 1982

■ **Command the lone** tank left on the battlefield, tasked with fending off the relentless attacks by enemy tanks and missiles upon your position. Although inspired by *Battlezone*, you don't move your tank, but rotate and adjust the sights about a fixed position, focusing your aim on the next target. There is a refreshing clarity to proceedings, even though they are mostly comprised of PETSCII characters, with large scaling graphics moving across the smooth scrolling background. With small hit-zones on the enemy units and a gradual speed increase across levels, *Tank Atak* offers a fairly decent challenge.

Minority Report

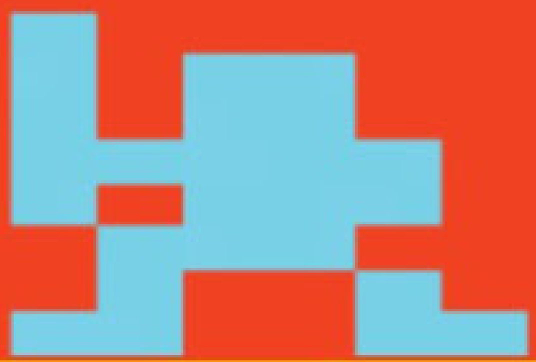






» [VIC-20] Cleaned out level two, onto level three!

SWORD OF FARGOAL



■ DEVELOPER: EPYX ■ YEAR: 1982

■ **Automated Simulations (soon to be Epyx) was a reputable publisher known mostly for its strategy and RPG games.** Sharply following in the steps of *Rescue At Rigel*, this was another release aiming to be more arcade-orientated with some hints of role-playing and strategy included. It was to prove reasonably successful for the company.

Your task is to retrieve the Sword of Fargoal. Arriving on level one, you find yourself in darkness, armed only with a short sword and a couple of spells. Each level is revealed by exploring, upon which you may encounter all manner of enemy creatures to battle. Success brings experience points, and XP like in all good RPGs will eventually level up your character.

The other way to level up is to trade gold for XP at the temple on each level. However you can only carry so much at one time and any extra can be buried for retrieval before leaving. Sometimes this means having to retrace your steps and trigger new enemies and traps! While you should be wary of traps, these are often the only way to earn new spells, which can include a shield, invisibility and better light.

Sword Of Fargoal is an easy to pick up and play title, but one that requires some guile to complete. Tread carefully at level one, and soon you can take on better foes, but never get too confident. It's a highly enjoyable game, with plenty of replay value due to the randomly generated dungeons.

» ASTRO NELL

■ DEVELOPER: MATT SIMMONDS ■ YEAR: 2004

■ The VIC-20 never had a proper *Jet Set Willy* clone until this game, an 80-plus room collect-a-thon of epic and staggering proportions, all shoved into unexpanded memory.

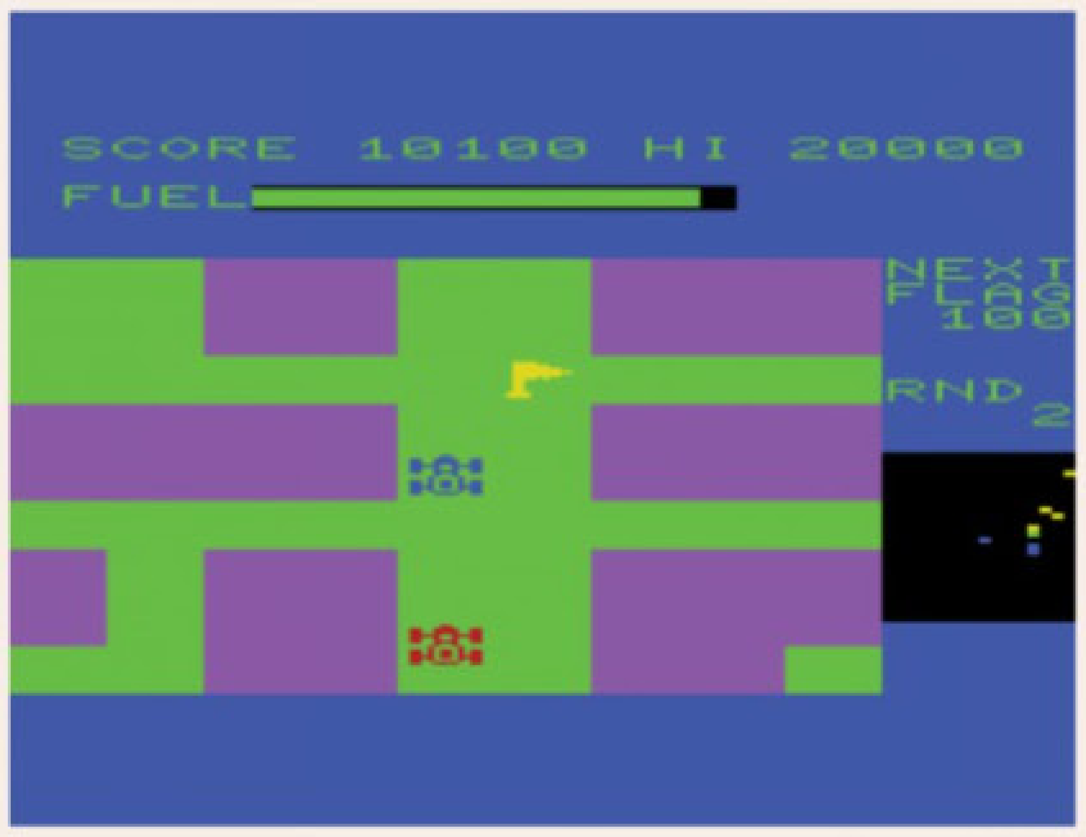


» BERZERK MMX+

■ DEVELOPER: ROBERT HURST ■ YEAR: 2010

■ One of the finest *Berzerk* conversions to a home format, complete even with speech. Keeps everything about the original, and lays on a pretty substantial challenge.

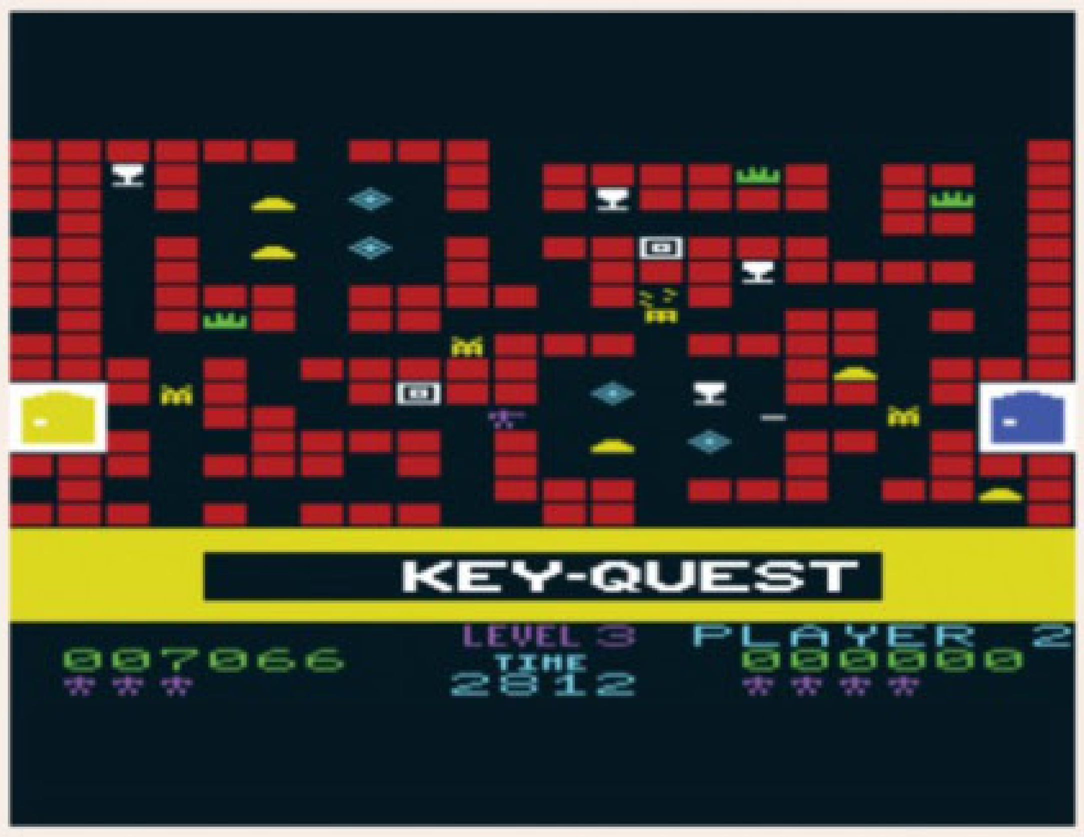




» RALLY-X

■ DEVELOPER: COMMODORE ■ YEAR: 1981

■ **Much of the** history of this title was touched upon in the entry for *Jelly Monsters*. Like its counterpart, it was a legitimate conversion that was sold in Japan, however it did not suffer the same fate when released in the West. After the problems with *Jelly Monsters* and *Star Battle*, the graphics were changed and the game issued as *Radar Rat Race* instead. This somehow kept Bally Midway off Commodore's back, or maybe it was the deal signed to convert some of its titles instead. *Rally-X* is yet again the better game by comparison, a faithful conversion to the original that maintains the graphics and playability of the Namco original.



» KEY QUEST

■ DEVELOPER: TYMAC ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **The only real** problem with this game is that it is incredibly rare; there are only three known cartridges existing, and one copy of the manual. Thankfully for everyone else the code has been dumped to allow play via emulation. As can be seen *Key Quest* is a *Tutankham* clone, but one that plays to the advantages of the VIC-20 and maintains its own identity. The resolution of the graphics is perfect for the machine with all the action on one screen, and everything moves very fluidly, even when a lot of enemies have been generated. The game was released on the C64 the following year, but the VIC-20 version is far more impressive.



» SKYHAWK

■ DEVELOPER: QUICKSILVA ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Take control of** your Skyhawk plane and defend the skies and ground from the constant attacks of the enemy forces in this bi-directional shooter. Keen-eyed gamers may think this looks very similar to Steve Lee's *Falcon Patrol*, and they would not be far wrong. Both fuel and ammo are limited, forcing you to land every so often to restock, but the enemy knows this and will attempt to bomb your refuelling platforms. The platforms are essentially the replacement for the humanoids in *Defender*, the inspiration for both titles. Tricky and rewarding, with a futile inevitability about it, *Skyhawk* is an example of a game where you know you will eventually lose.

BANDITS

■ DEVELOPER: SIRIUS ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Bandits. Thousands of 'em.** All looking to steal the supplies from your lunar base in this challenging shooter that has whiffs of *Galaga*, *Phoenix* and *Rip Off* about it. So get aboard your lunar defender and fire back! The bog-standard Phalanx fighters line up on the left-hand side waiting to attack you, but will descend in formations of either one, three or six ships at a time. Don't underestimate them either, as they all have heat-seeking missiles aboard.

To combat their shots and other nasties you may encounter, you have a shield that runs off the base's power. Any hit to the shield will sap some of the energy, but this will gradually regenerate during play. And boy, will you need it. The utterly annoying Menace grubs will actively dodge your shots, and Carriers will burst into smaller, bouncing units when destroyed.

At the end of each wave, you receive bonus points for the number of supplies that were not stolen by the enemy. There is a classic degree of risk and reward in the gameplay however, as you score more points for shooting an enemy that is carrying a supply module. Just don't let them grab all of them, otherwise it's game over.

Bandits is a compelling and addictive shooter that, while starting off reasonably tough, progressively increases the difficulty during the game in a fair and balanced manner. As a result, you always feel like you can do that little bit better each time you pick it up.





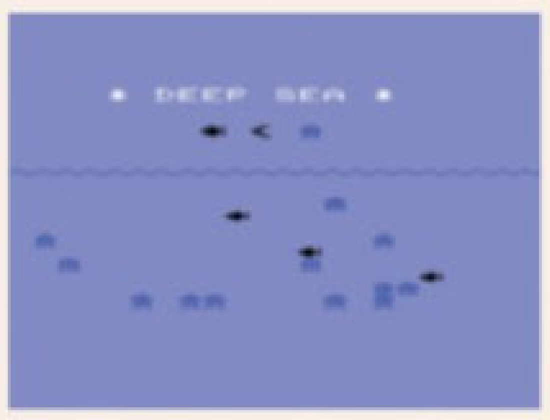


» [VIC-20] Bring on the attack of multiple bouncing balls!

» GAME THEORY

■ DEVELOPER: JEFF DANIELS ■ YEAR: 2007

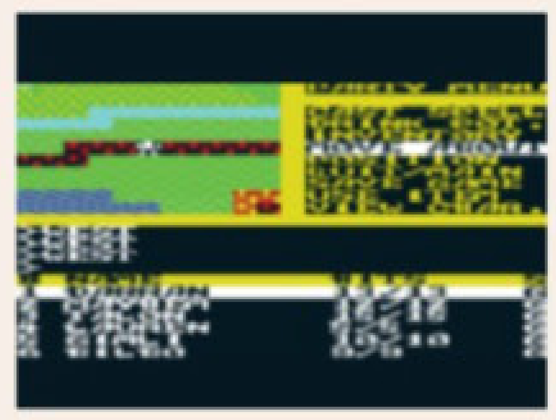
■ *WarioWare* and rhythm-action games have occupied a niche in the market, and this homebrew distils all the random and quick reaction nature of the genre.



» REALMS OF QUEST 3

■ DEVELOPER: GHISLAIN DE BLOIS ■ YEAR: 2009

■ A massive, detailed, gorgeous RPG, faithful to the style of *Ultima* and *Bard's Tale*, made possible by 32K RAM expansion. It's available to buy from Psytronik Software.

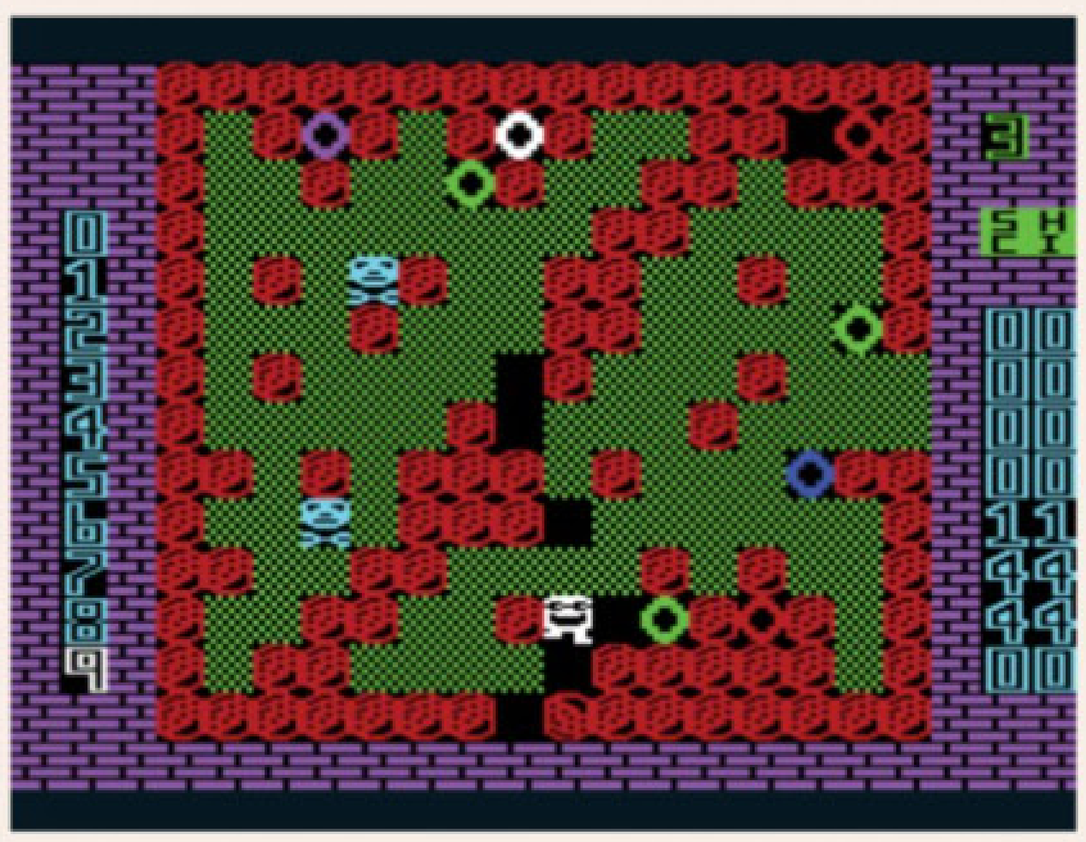




» HELLGATE

■ DEVELOPER: LLAMASOFT ■ YEAR: 1984

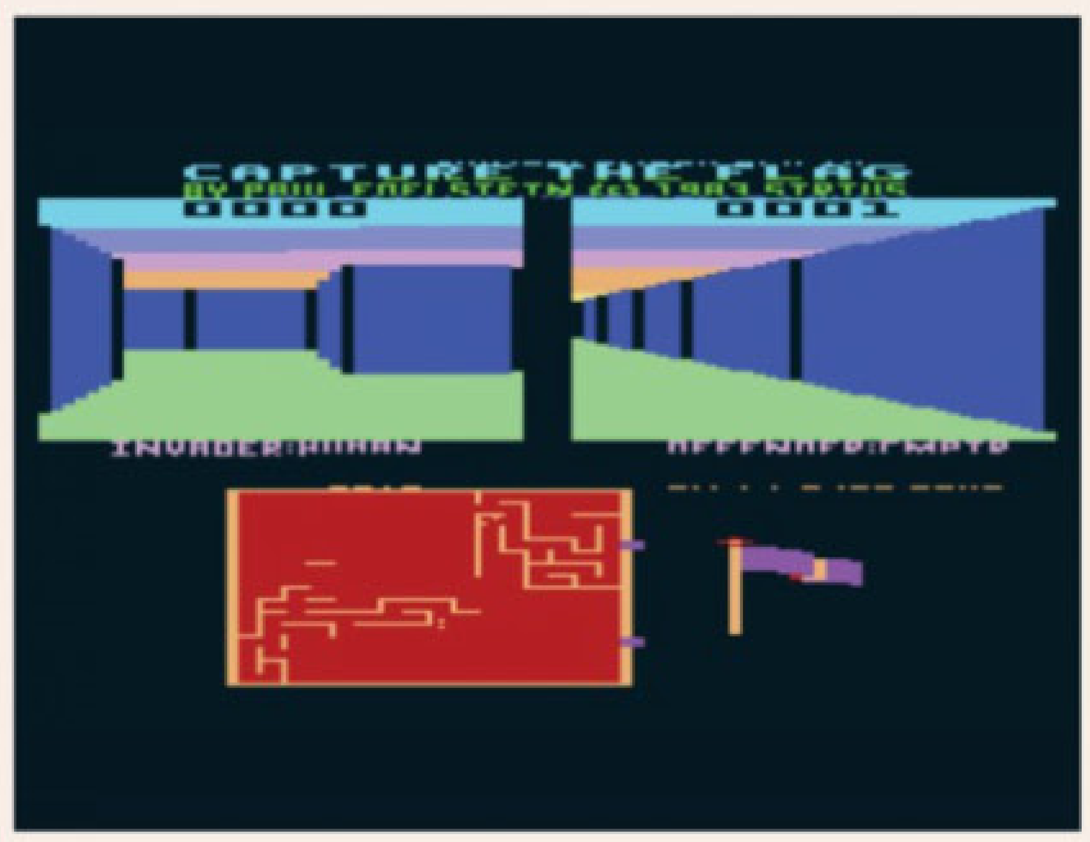
■ **The first ten** games of this you play could last about ten minutes total. In a pattern you may have sensed through this article so far, like other titles, *Hellgate* is not a forgiving game. Jeff Minter expanded upon his earlier game *Laser Zone*, with its two axis guns and direction of attack, into all four axes for maximum sensory overload. Not helping is the fact you can't shoot the guns constantly as they overheat, but to compensate, the supply of screen zappers is greater should you get into trouble. And you will. Minter's games have always been about entering 'the zone', and to be at one with *Hellgate* means mastering everything it can throw at you.



» ROCKMAN

■ DEVELOPER: MASTERTRONIC ■ YEAR: 1984

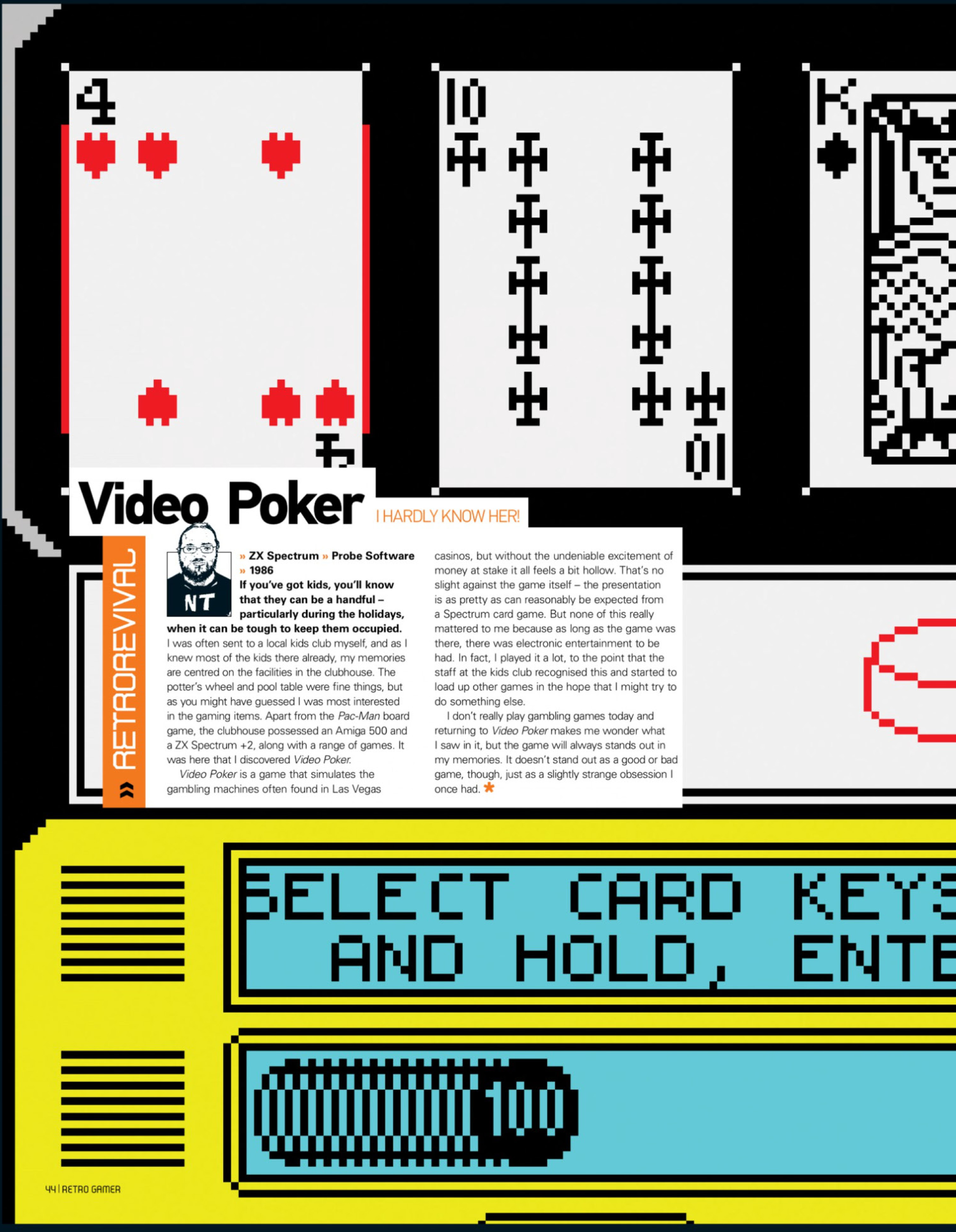
■ ***Rockman* has rather** bright and gaudy graphics, sounds as refined as it looks, and on first play may confuse you into oblivion, despite appearing to be a *Boulder Dash* clone. Your task is to collect all the shiny rings before the timer counts down to zero. Hampering you are a multitude of boulders and various deadly enemies roaming the cleared tunnels. The differences come with the play mechanics being subtly altered and that there is a definite route you have to work out in order to complete each level without dying. Further play yields tricks to make life easier, albeit if you do ever finish the game, you will probably have torn all your hair out in the process.



» CAPTURE THE FLAG

■ DEVELOPER: SIRIUS ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **No, your eyes** are not deceiving you – those are two independent 3D moving windows and a dynamically drawn maze all at the same time on a VIC-20. Thankfully, for all the technical impressiveness, the game itself is a fun little title that can be played against the computer or another person. One player is 'invader', tasked with stealing the flag, and the other is 'defender', who has to touch the invader to capture them. Every round the maze is redrawn and only reveals itself on the map through exploration. The controls even allow for both rotation and strafe-style motion. Sure, it's a simple premise, but the execution is outstanding.



RETROREVIVAL

Video Poker

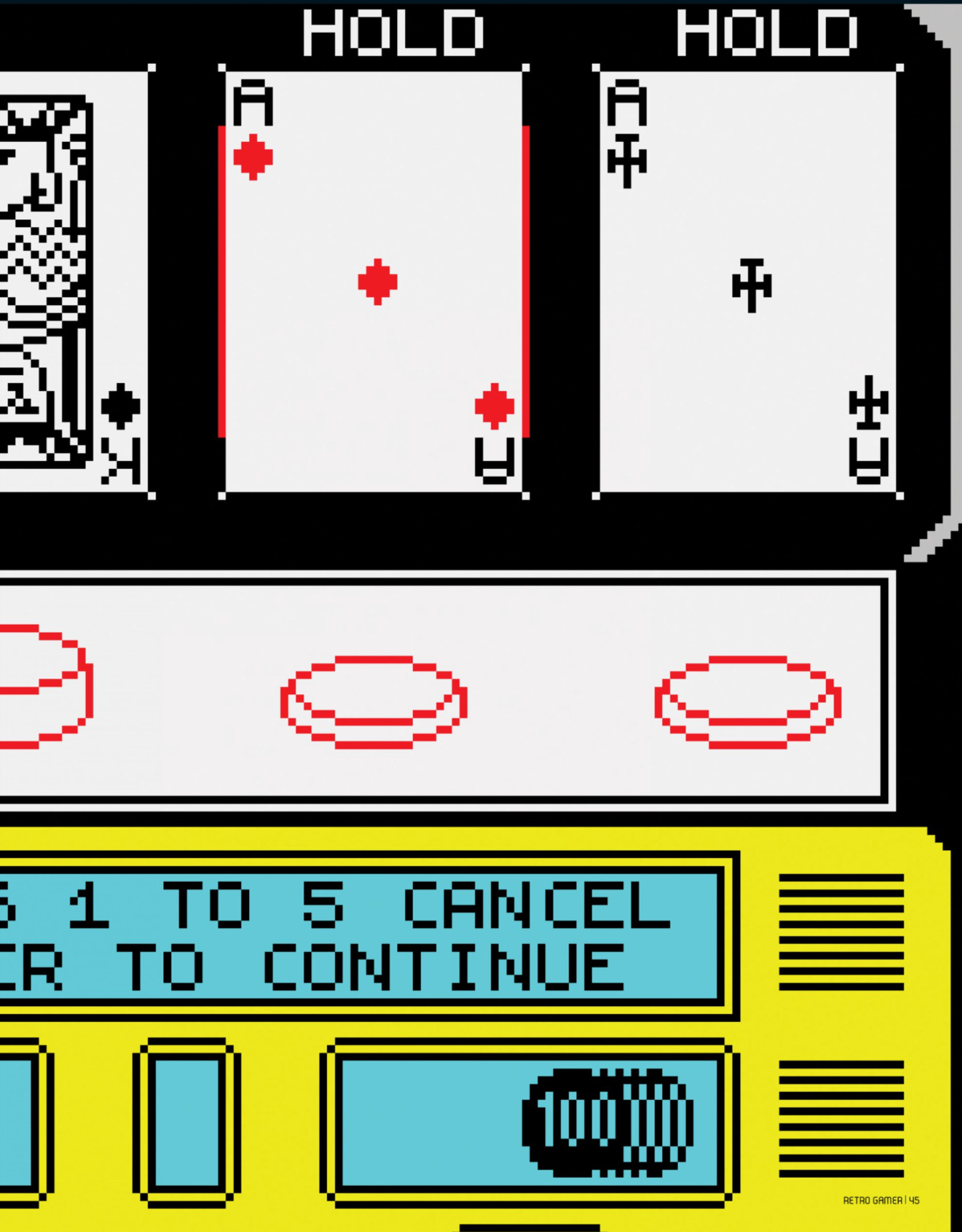
I HARDLY KNOW HER!

» ZX Spectrum » Probe Software » 1986

If you've got kids, you'll know that they can be a handful – particularly during the holidays, when it can be tough to keep them occupied. I was often sent to a local kids club myself, and as I knew most of the kids there already, my memories are centred on the facilities in the clubhouse. The potter's wheel and pool table were fine things, but as you might have guessed I was most interested in the gaming items. Apart from the *Pac-Man* board game, the clubhouse possessed an Amiga 500 and a ZX Spectrum +2, along with a range of games. It was here that I discovered *Video Poker*.

Video Poker is a game that simulates the gambling machines often found in Las Vegas casinos, but without the undeniable excitement of money at stake it all feels a bit hollow. That's no slight against the game itself – the presentation is as pretty as can reasonably be expected from a Spectrum card game. But none of this really mattered to me because as long as the game was there, there was electronic entertainment to be had. In fact, I played it a lot, to the point that the staff at the kids club recognised this and started to load up other games in the hope that I might try to do something else.

I don't really play gambling games today and returning to *Video Poker* makes me wonder what I saw in it, but the game will always stands out in my memories. It doesn't stand out as a good or bad game, though, just as a slightly strange obsession I once had. *


HOLD
HOLD
1 TO 5 CANCEL
TO CONTINUE
100



THE MAKING OF theme

HOSPITAL

Got sweaty palms, a King Complex or a broken heart? Have you suffered prolonged exposure to the moon? Dr David Crookes advises you get yourself to Theme Hospital



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:** BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS
- » **RELEASED:** 1997
- » **PLATFORM:** PC, PLAYSTATION
- » **GENRE:** BUSINESS SIMULATION

Mark Webley was *Theme Hospital*'s designer and had the difficult task of following in the footsteps of the extremely popular *Theme Park*.



Scrapping drunk teenagers. Scared, diseased loved ones. Impatient patients. Road accident victims, transplants, tears. It's official: hospitals are not fun places to be. Unless, of course, it's *Theme Hospital*, Bullfrog's follow-up to its incredible best-seller *Theme Park*. In which case, hospitals are laugh-out loud riots of hilarity and very much a rich source of gaming material. Like *Scrubs* then. Mark Webley, the game's designer, was not initially convinced of this. Although he had chosen to make the game, having picked the title off a blackboard chalked up by Bullfrog co-founder Peter Molyneux, his research was yielding rather daunting results. Both he and lead artist Gary Carr spent many an hour walking the corridors of The Royal Surrey County Hospital in Guildford and lunching in its cafe, trying desperately to become inspired.

"But we found that hospitals are really dull," Mark recalls. "There were tile floors and boring walls and occasionally a desk and a vending machine. Our research was getting us nowhere." Needing a greater insight, they wrote to the hospital and asked if they could be shown around formally but negotiations didn't go too well. "They wanted a percentage of the profits of the game and that wasn't going to happen because we didn't even know if there would be any so that was kind of annoying," he continues.

Luckily, a second hospital, Frimley Park, greeted them with open arms. "They showed us around and it was great – we saw a lot of stuff," Mark remembers. "They even allowed us to put on the greens and watch an operation." Not that Gary had the stomach for it – when his cat bit his finger and a small amount of blood appeared he had fainted, so watching an operation in which "this guy was face down and they were sucking blood from his neck and there was this goo and noise" wasn't helping his stomach. Mark and Gary were making so much noise that the surgeon ordered: "Get those bloody idiots out". By this time, though, they had seen enough. "I remember we watched a spinal operation one morning which was bad enough, then the person who had been assigned as our guide said 'alright, after lunch we can pop down to the morgue if you like'," says Gary wincing at the memory. "That was it for us, we needed to give this game a new angle."

> **"This guy was face down and they were sucking blood from his neck and there was this goo and noise"**
> Mark Webley

"It was around this time that we started to believe we shouldn't be too realistic," continues Mark. "Although that was our original aim, Gary felt we should have made up diseases so we talked about it with the whole studio and the team and we had a vote. I guess dealing with a lot of illness is macabre and horrible and in retrospect it was the right idea. We began imagining some made-up diseases instead."

The team didn't want to become political ("there was, still is and probably always will be this kind of sense that you've got the NHS and they're doing such a poor job," says Mark. "There were stories of people being left on hospital trolleys in corridors waiting for operations") but they wanted to make the game challenging. They ensured there was always something to do – always an emergency around the corner. Whether it was an inspection, a VIP visiting, messy wards, too few toilets, a wayward handyman, whether or not the temperature was too hot or cold or a chopper was bringing 15 victims of a crash; it was a matter of spinning plates. ▶





» [PC] Things get out of hand with sick all over the floor and too many people waiting.

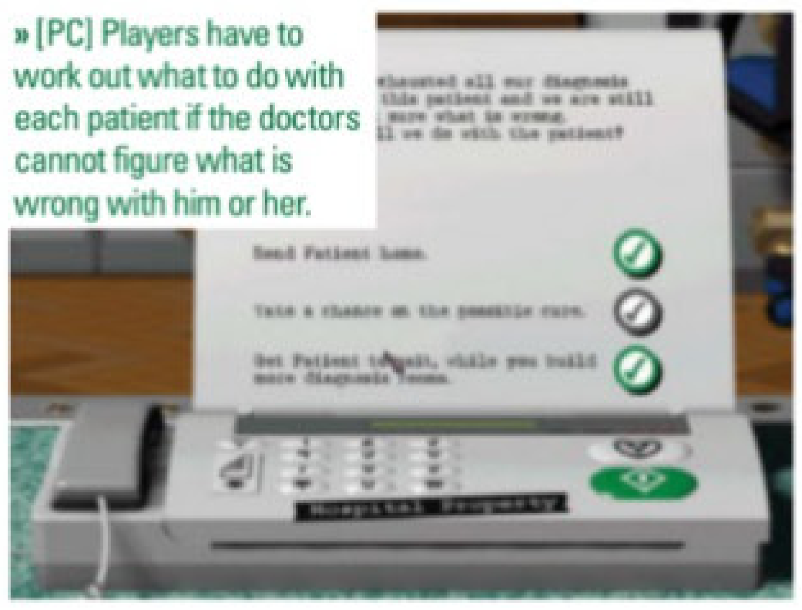


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

POPULOUS
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1989

SYNDICATE
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1993

THEME PARK (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1994



» [PC] Players have to work out what to do with each patient if the doctors cannot figure what is wrong with him or her.



» *Theme Hospital*'s distinct look is down to lead artist Gary Carr.

▶ Helping with the task of balancing real and unreal was stalwart journalist James Leach who had worked on numerous magazines including *Amstrad Action*, *Your Sinclair* and *Amiga Format*. Peter had visited him to demo *Theme Park* and the pair took lunch together to chat about the game. "As we talked, I suggested other things which might be fun to manage," says James. "I recall mentioning a mine or quarry, a prison and a hospital. He was most enthused by the hospital and prison and he asked me to write my ideas up and send them to him. I didn't hear back."

A few months later, though, and James was hired by Bullfrog. He turned up to find Mark and Gary were in the initial stages of making *Theme Hospital*. But for graphic artist Gary, it wasn't entirely what he had planned. Having originally left Bullfrog to work for The Bitmap Brothers, believing *Theme Park* would not be the success it had become, he thought he was rejoining to work on *Dungeon Keeper*. "I really liked the sound of that so I swallowed my pride and ran back," he says. "I kept asking Peter about the game. 'When will it start?' Stuff like that. He just smiled and said he would tell me soon enough. Then he eventually gave me the news – I wouldn't be working on *Dungeon Keeper* at all. I was to work on a sequel to *Theme Park* called *Theme Hospital*. Great! A sequel to the game I left the company for in the first place!" Rather than leave again, though, he got stuck in.

Mark's task was to head up the project even though he was rather new to making original games, having previously managed a department that converted Bullfrog's games onto other formats. Peter wasn't involved at all – "he had his hands full with the really cool sounding *Dungeon Keeper*," says Gary – but the ideas flowed. "We planned to make the game with four different time periods," says Gary of an idea that would need some major treatment later down the line.

Mark and Gary decided the best approach was to strip away any sense of the real so the graphics were made deliberately cartoonish. The game also distanced itself from the NHS model. *Theme Hospital* was a game in which profit was important and players had to think of it as a business. A successful player would be able to move up the ladder and work on a larger and potentially more profitable hospital (each carrying the name of a famous computer from various films, TV shows or comics). In each case, they would build a hospital from scratch, determining the look of the building and the people working in it so that patients would be treated or discharged according to the whim – and education – of the doctors the player controlled.

"Many ideas came in and disappeared," says Mark. "We had a good idea of what we wanted to do with the game and it helped that it was a genre of game that I enjoyed playing but the important thing with games like *Theme Hospital* and *Theme Park* is that it is not about how a hospital, theme park or a business runs. It is about how people think they are run."

The small team, which ironically worked in offices next to The Royal Surrey County Hospital, began with some preconceived ideas of the medical process. People, they assumed, see a GP first of all. "The GP kind of makes a guess, maybe sends you for an X-ray or some blood tests, stuff like that, and then you go back to see the GP," says Mark. "So the kind of flow of what the patients were doing was kind of what we understood them to be doing. The reality might have been quite different but it was more important to go with what a man or woman in the street would expect."

To make life easier, the team drew spiritual inspiration from *Theme Park* – and took on board a healthy dollop of borrowed code. An editor which ▶

"Great! A sequel to the game I left the company for in the first place!"

Gary Carr's heart initially sank when he was told to work on Theme Hospital.

TOILET HUMOUR

Sound effect secrets with Adrian Moore



The main sound man for *Theme Hospital* was Russell Shaw but one of his underlings, wannabe lead designer Adrian Moore, made a big noise in the game. Fresh from completing the sound effects for *Syndicate Wars*, he revelled in *Theme Hospital*'s humour.

Sitting with a large sound effects library, spanning scores of CDs, he would use the audio-editing software Sound Forge to pick out specific sounds. Some, such as the snooker balls clinking together, were straight from the library. Others such as the treatment machines were more creative. "I revelled in mixing the sound of a hydraulic lifter with an electric egg mixer to create a unique machine. But when I got to the part of the game where the little people used toilets, I got really inspired."

'Fart' noises came from a 'fart DAT' Adrian set up while working in a recording studio with bands such as T'Pau, Prefab Sprout and Seal. His producer, engineer and himself would often 'let go' at night and Moore jokingly recorded the sounds. With *Theme Hospital* he suddenly had a use for them. "I edited out the best juicy, whiny, ripping bum burps I could find, and made the little people in the game immortalise the late night recording studio captures from years before. I figured at least a few people would get to hear my bottom recordings and this made me very happy indeed."



» [PC] It's important to keep the staff as well as the patients happy, and chucking money their way often helps.



» [PC] The game is about as far removed from the NHS as it could be – the idea is to make a healthy profit.

"I NEED A DOCTOR!"

The top ailments of Theme Hospital and how to cure them

ALIEN DNA

■ Aliens appear in later levels and, if not treated, they will be hell-bent on taking over the city so buy and use the DNA machines to cure them.



BLOATY HEAD

■ Caused by drinking dirty rainwater and smelling cheese, the head needs to be popped and re-inflated by a qualified clinician and a cool machine.



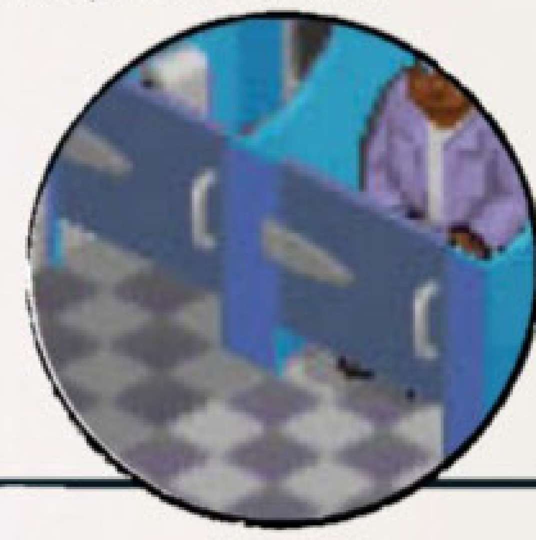
FRACTURED BONES

■ Patients will hobble in with bad arms, legs and sometimes heads, and they need to be sorted with the aid of a cast for a short while.



BROKEN WIND

■ A disease that is caused by eating a hearty meal then working out on a treadmill. It needs a trip to the pharmacy because it stinks.



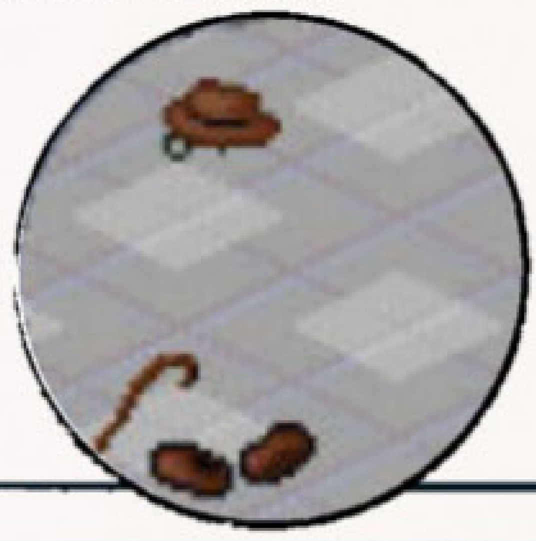
HAIRYITIS

■ Evidence of the Yeti or too much exposure to the moon? Get the patient to the electrolysis machine and the hair will just drop away.



INVISIBILITY

■ A floating hat and glasses? It must be invisibility, a disease caused by invisible, radioactive ants. It needs a curative colourful liquid.



JELLYITIS

■ Patients will wobble into the hospital like blobs of jelly thanks to their gelatin-rich diets. It's a trip to the clinic for them and a spell in some Jelly Vat.



KING COMPLEX

■ Don't step on this man's blue suede shoes for he is a wannabe Elvis. Words of wisdom from a psychiatrist ensure the pretender sees the error of his ways.



SERIOUS RADIATION

■ Chewing plutonium isotopes is never a good idea and it turns patients into a glowing green shadow. They need a thorough decontamination shower.



SLACK TONGUE

■ With their tongues hanging from their mouths due to yapping excessively about rubbish soap operas, they need a trip to the Slicer.



TV PERSONALITIES

■ Daytime TV can make zombies of us all but in this case it entails a trip to the couch where they will be encouraged to snap up a radio instead.



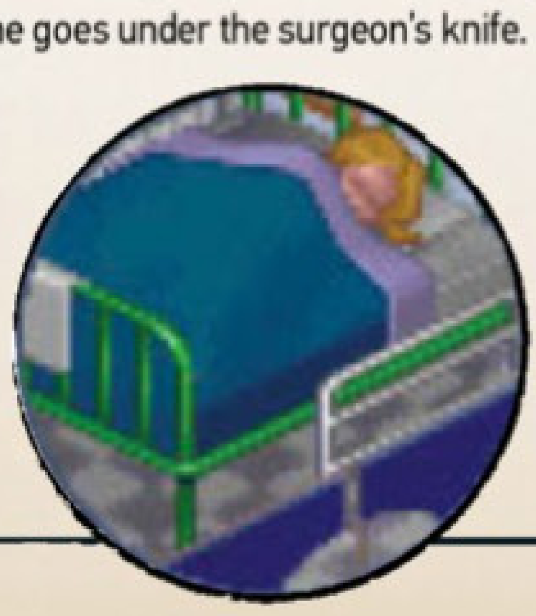
THE SQUITS

■ It's time for the patient to make a run to the loo and then pop to the pharmacy before their entire innards disappear down the toilet forever.



UNEXPECTED SWELLING

■ The pain is terrible for this patient but she will only be cured of her swelling if she goes under the surgeon's knife.



TRANSPARENCY

■ Said to be caused by licking yoghurt from foil lids, this illness makes the flesh transparent and it needs a special concoction from the pharmacy.



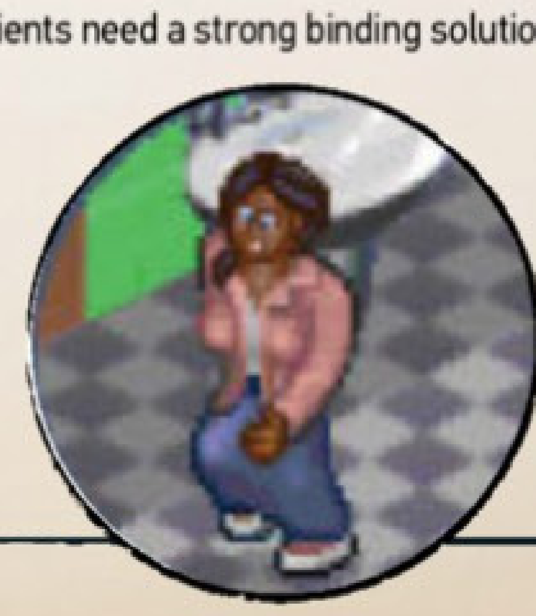
INFECTIOUS LAUGHTER

■ Sitcoms from a certain era will make many people laugh but if they start to repeat annoying catchphrases, they must go to see a shrink. Seriously.



GASTRIC EJECTIONS

■ Too many trips to the toilet are caused by some unsavoury takeaways but rather than let them suffer, these patients need a strong binding solution.



MOLYNEUX'S MUSINGS

Why Peter Molyneux would love a Theme Hospital sequel

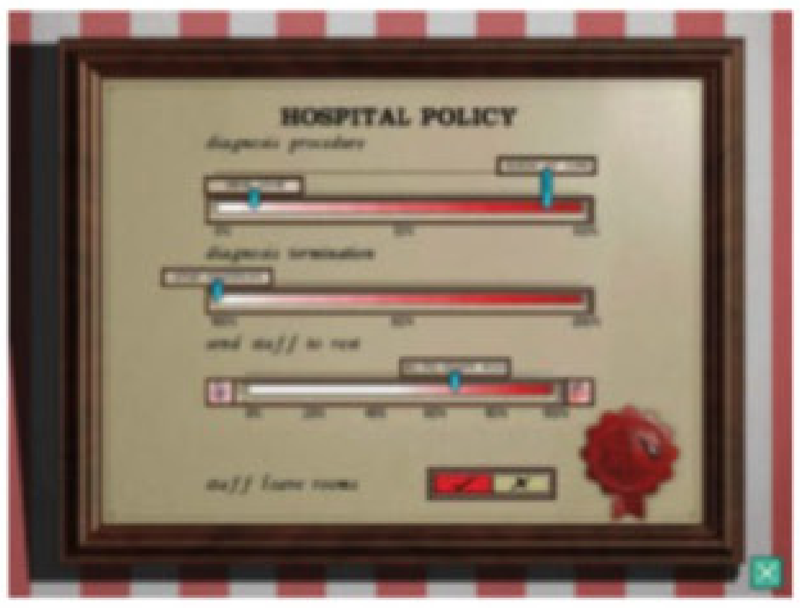


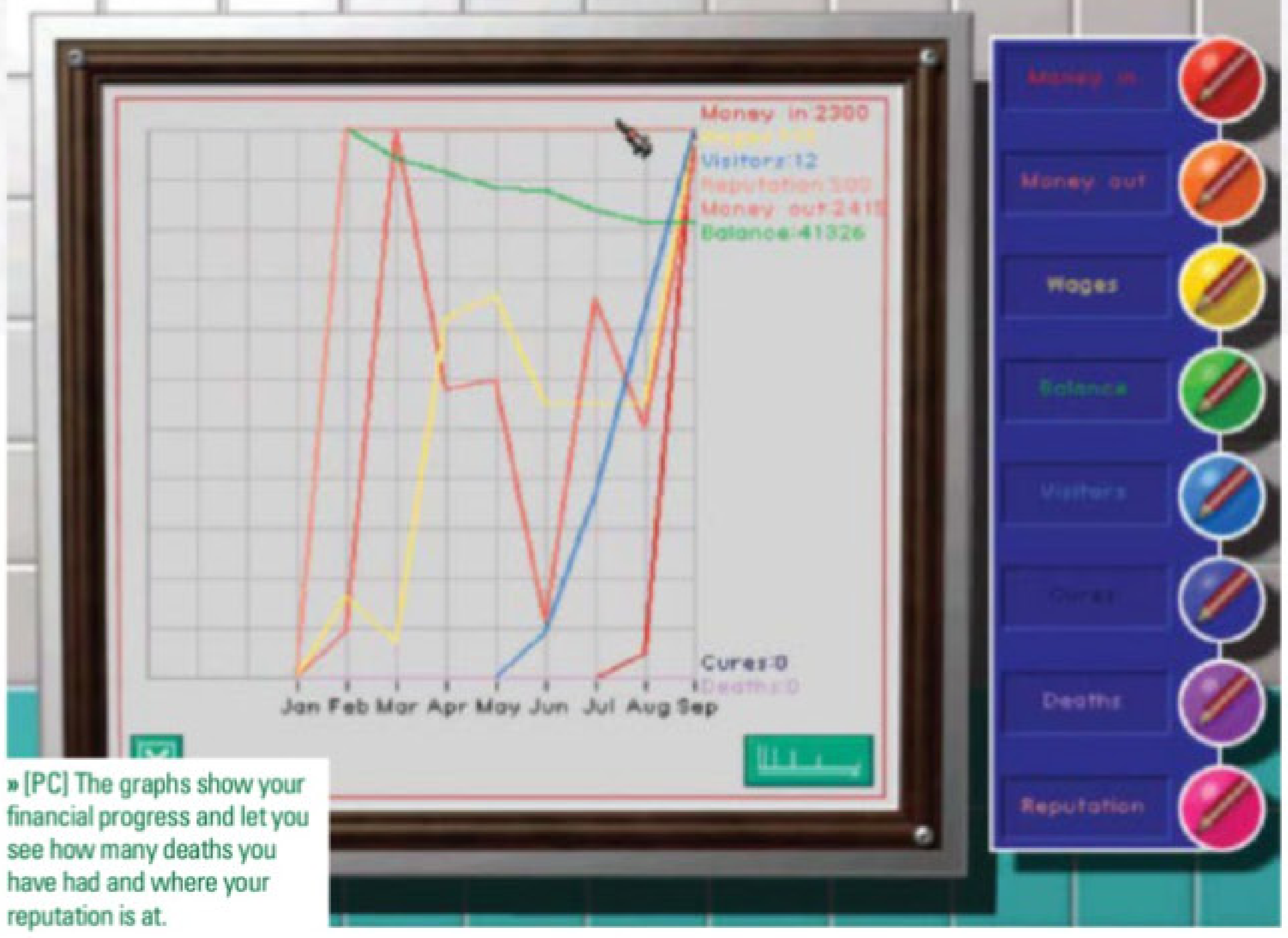
Peter Molyneux wasn't directly involved in the making of *Theme Park* but he sure loved the result – and he tells us that he would love to see it make a comeback. "*Theme Hospital* was the next in Bullfrog's *Theme* series coming off the back of *Theme Park* (which sold more than 15 million units). I do remember talking to the lovely writer James Leach (who is doing the writing on *Godus*) about the idea of doing a *Theme* game based in a hospital. The approach Mark Webley and his team took was to take a serious subject like hospitals and mix it with humour, they spent a long time working on the ability of the player to place down rooms, and to deal with hospital emergencies, many of which were bizarre illnesses such as the bloaty head which was actually based upon a allergic reaction I had in the office where my face puffed up to an alarming size. I also remember pushing them to implement the ability for players to mix their own drugs, but it didn't make it in. *Theme Hospital* was a great game that I and many people remember. EA should look at updating it."

» [PC] The Research Department is extremely handy for finding new cures for the many ailments that appear.



» [PC] Running a hospital certainly isn't easy so you'll need to keep an eye on different aspects of it to succeed.





» [PC] The graphs show your financial progress and let you see how many deaths you have had and where your reputation is at.

> **"They may have died before you were certain of a diagnosis"**
> Mark Webley

▶ Peter had set up to allow for easier animation was built upon by Mark who called it the Complex Engine. The sprite drawer was almost the same too. In fact, the *Theme Hospital* team made some nice breakthroughs in its approach to sprites, cleverly combining them. If, for instance, there was a doctor, a chair and a desk as three sprites and the doctor was supposed to sit on the chair, the game would see the doctor walk to the entry point of the desk. The engine would then merge the doctor and the chair into one sprite, which would then be animated. It made life easier for the programmers and artists and sped up the workflow of the game, even though the player would be none the wiser of what was happening behind the scenes.



More noticeable was the setting up of rules. Players could decide how the decision-making process would progress. "You could have it set so that if you are 75 per cent sure what the illness is the cure could just go ahead, otherwise the player needs to make a decision," says Mark. "You could tweak that if you didn't want to be bothered with that kind of thing." Similarly, the player had to decide on the level of expenditure. "The idea was that there was only so much you can do without assistance," says Mark. "You could diagnose or buy a diagnosis machine – some of which were really expensive – and those would throw up problems of their own. You may have had people waiting to use them and they may have died before you managed to get to a point where you were pretty much certain of a diagnosis."

The game threw in some curveballs too. "Someone with a hugely inflated head may or may not have had bloaty head disease," says Mark. "The bloaty head cure may not have worked because the diagnosis was a bad tooth. Suspending disbelief let players make decisions over whether to risk a cure or send a patient home. It added a nice dimension to the game."

To achieve all of this, you would expect the team had lots of meetings, but given the small size of the studio at the time, there were few formal get-togethers. Most gatherings would be around the desks of the artists and programmers and to have the artists and programmers together was something new for Bullfrog. It had traditionally separated them on either ends of the room, but assembling teams together made the tracking progress much easier. Mark took his team to the pub once a week with a sheet of paper listing the items that needed to be done. "We were a bunch of guys and a girl making a game and if one of us didn't do it or Gary didn't do something then it wouldn't have gotten done," explains Mark. "The way we worked gave ownership of the different parts to those working on the game."

James's role was to keep injecting a sense of fun into the game. "I wrote all of the text, came up with the diseases and I had a ball doing it," he says. "I recall you had to hire janitors and build toilets. If you failed to do so, people would poo on the floors. I remember writing the Advisor a line to remind you to provide toilets, saying that people were getting the turtle's head. I think I nicked it from *Viz* but it briefly became a Bullfrog catchphrase."

The made-up diseases made the game stand out the most. There was going to be an illness called Elvis Impersonator but EA's legal team advised the team that it couldn't use Elvis's name nor his likeness because Elvis's estate owned the rights. So, it was renamed King Complex. "We had others we didn't get round to doing," says Mark. "Animal magnetism, where people would come in with sort of lots of small animals like cats or dogs attached to them, had to be cut – the idea was to create a machine that would remove the animals. But I liked bloaty head disease, especially the cure – popping it and re-inflating. The animation was of the head pops and the doctor twanging the head like a balloon."

In terms of volume of work, James admits it was actually quite small. But

» [PC] Watching the patients and staff go around their daily routines is still entertaining to see.



it gave him time to think and come up with some wild ideas. He also took on board suggestions. "There were celebrities as well and I made those up but someone – I think a coder called Matt Chilton – had put placeholder names in for me to change. I kept a couple because I liked them, and one was Aung Sang Soo Kyi, the then exiled opposition leader of Burma. I didn't check to see if she was real, but I liked the name so it went in. Turns out she was indeed real."

The biggest problem the team faced, though, was having too many ideas, many of which – due to a lack of time – could not make the final cut. One of the casualties was the four time zones that had initially been planned. "We thought we'd do a futuristic era with way out stuff as well as medieval and Victorian eras," says Mark. "Looking back at the time it took to do the modern era, you would think all we need to do is keep the same kind of machines and change them over but there just wasn't the time. I'm so glad we started with the modern era."

Another feature that was dropped was a screen that allowed players to mix chemicals – blue, red and green – and apply them to different illnesses. "It was a cool idea and a great screen but it was not fully formed and it didn't work well within the rest of the game, feeling like a very poor add-on," says Mark. Multiplayer didn't make the initial release and it had to be downloaded as a patch later. That infuriated Mark who kicked himself for not spotting earlier that the multiplayer mode was full of holes and incredibly buggy. Had they attempted to fix them, the game would have slipped so the decision was to go without.

But time wasn't the only thing preying on the developer's mind – it worried about making the game too inaccessible. *Theme Hospital* was complex, with the player able to change so much of the game via a system of menus. Gamers could decide which doctors they wanted based on their budget and needs and they had to keep on top of maintenance. Staff could tire easily and needed breaks. It could so easily have felt like work. "Much of my job was spent on simplifying the game," says tester Jon Rennie. "Mark and Peter were really keen to help players get straight into the game without a lengthy tutorial. We kept the Advisor speech bubble but used tabbed alerts to start piling pressure on the players. We then used those tabs as icons above patients' heads to make it as visual as possible."

In the first versions of the game, the queue panels were entire screens that made it difficult to see where people were in the hospital. "It was quite a big job to change that to become the pop-up version that allowed you to drag and drop patients and doctors but was well worth the effort," Jon adds. "The game ran on a complex arrangements of stats and triggers unlike some of *Theme Park*, which all had to be balanced through repeated playing of the levels to get it right."



» [PC] Equipment doesn't last forever so you'll need to ensure you have staff who can fix them.

As the game came together it was getting more and more internal attention, with people in the studio actively playing it. Many loved the voice acting by Rebecca Green, the then girlfriend of programmer Andy Coglan. "She was a budding voiceover artist," says James. "We simply got her in to say the lines. She did an amazing job."

And yet even though the game was supposed to be light-hearted, some people lost their sense of humour – even before the game was released. Mark was asked to appear on a local radio station because NHS bosses were complaining about the game. "They were saying we shouldn't be dealing with stuff like this," he says. "They said it was unfair to poke fun at hospital management and staff. But they hadn't played the game. If they had, they would have seen that it was saying, 'look, running a hospital is hard but if you think you can run one try this'. I think taking the decision of not [using] the real illnesses meant [we] weren't stepping into the territory of having a pop at medical professionals."

Not that the negative publicity did any harm. Much to the surprise of both EA and Bullfrog – but less so to those who had worked on it – the game was a massive success. It shot to number one and it constantly appeared in the top five of the budget charts thereafter. "It was just constantly selling," says Mark, of a game that eventually sold 4 million copies. "It was a beautiful thing and made all the better for not being a flop. There was no need to resuscitate it at all." *

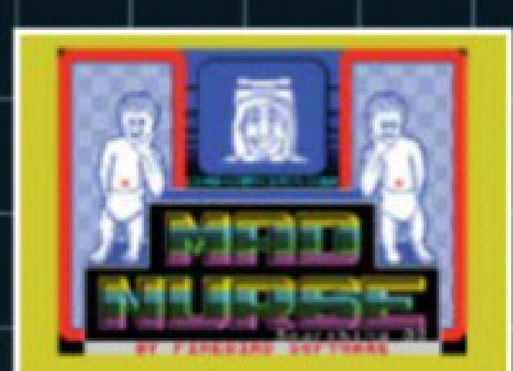
MEDICAL FUN

The hospital-based games that either revived you or flatlined



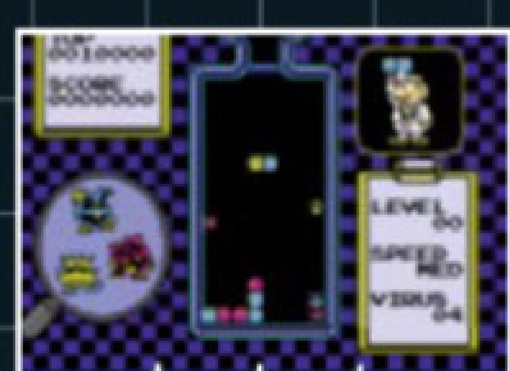
HOSPITAL TYCOON

At a guess, we'd say *Hospital Tycoon* was inspired by *Theme Hospital* albeit with a story that could come straight out of a US show like *Grey's Anatomy*. It has made-up diseases and the player needs to think of solutions to patient problems but the game makes things a little too easy. There is little of the frantic pace that *Theme Hospital* can throw up.



MAD NURSE

Mad Nurse on the Speccy and Commodore 64 was terrible to play then and it is just as bad nowadays. It lacks variation in its gameplay and given that babies actually die in this game, it's also in terribly bad taste. It is your job as the nurse to make sure you save them but it's not really enough to make it worthy of a replay at all.



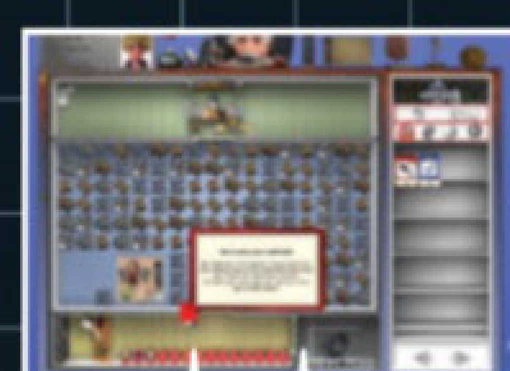
DR MARIO

It's not quite as hospital themed as the other games on here but more an attempt to shoe-horn Mario into yet another game, this one being a variation on *Tetris* but with our white-coated hero throwing pills into a jar and the addition of some viruses that you ultimately need to clear. It was a perfect tonic for the tired *Tetris* genre.



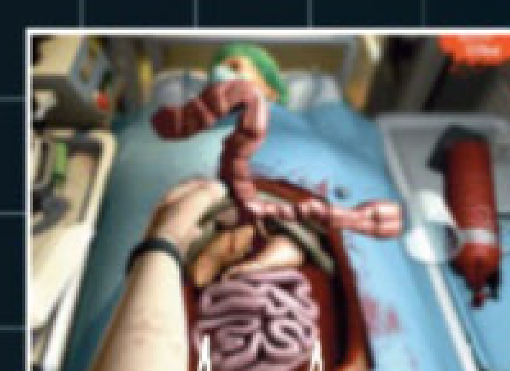
ST CRIPPENS

St Crippens is the worst hospital in the world. Unfortunately, you are in it, the result of a minor accident. Needing to leave, you have to dodge the hospital staff and various items strewn on the floor and you must trade items with other patients to aid your escape. This maze-style game looks awful but there are some lovely touches.



KAPI HOSPITAL

Even today there are attempts to produce a hospital management sim and *Kapi Hospital* is the latest, bringing the genre to your browser. It's a tad more fiddly and not as user-friendly or as absorbing as *Theme Hospital* even though it seems to take inspiration from Bullfrog's game, but as a casual title it works reasonably well.



SURGEON SIMULATOR 2013

Initially created as part of 2013's Global Game Jam, *Surgeon Simulator* has gone on to delight and frustrate those who play it. You take control of a drunk surgeon, using an intentionally clumsy keyboard and mouse system to perform intricate operations. It's difficult, but laced with dark humour.

SUGAR'S MARVELLOUS MACHINES

AN AMSTRAD CPC RETROSPECTIVE



30 years. 3 million sales. There is no doubt the CPC range of computers was a success for Amstrad, even if it trailed behind its competitors. David Crookes looks back at why we should learn to love Lord Sugar's plucky little underdog

These days, a new product is a failure unless it attracts a queue around the block a week before it arrives in the shops. It is common to see bedraggled shoppers wrapped up in sleeping bags, carriers filled with nibbles and anxious fingers drumming on warm cups of takeaway coffee.

It would be nice to say the same happened for the Amstrad CPC 464. It didn't – or it certainly didn't to the same degree. Some 60 shoppers waited outside retailer Rumbelows in London's Edgware Square for an hour when the 464 launched on 21 June 1984, although they "rushed forward" when the doors opened at 9.30am, according to *Amstrad CPC 464 User* magazine. By 10.30am 100 computers had been sold, but that kind of thing was deemed a success.

After all, this was only the beginning and similar stories were being told up and down the country. In competing on convenience (Amstrad made much noise about having a green screen or colour monitor bundled in the same package as the keyboard/computer) and price (the 464 cost as little as £239, the price dropping to £199 months later), the CPC became, what the London *Evening Standard* had called the "People's computer", a machine that consumers were willing to hire rather than fire. By the end of 1984, 200,000 units had been sold.

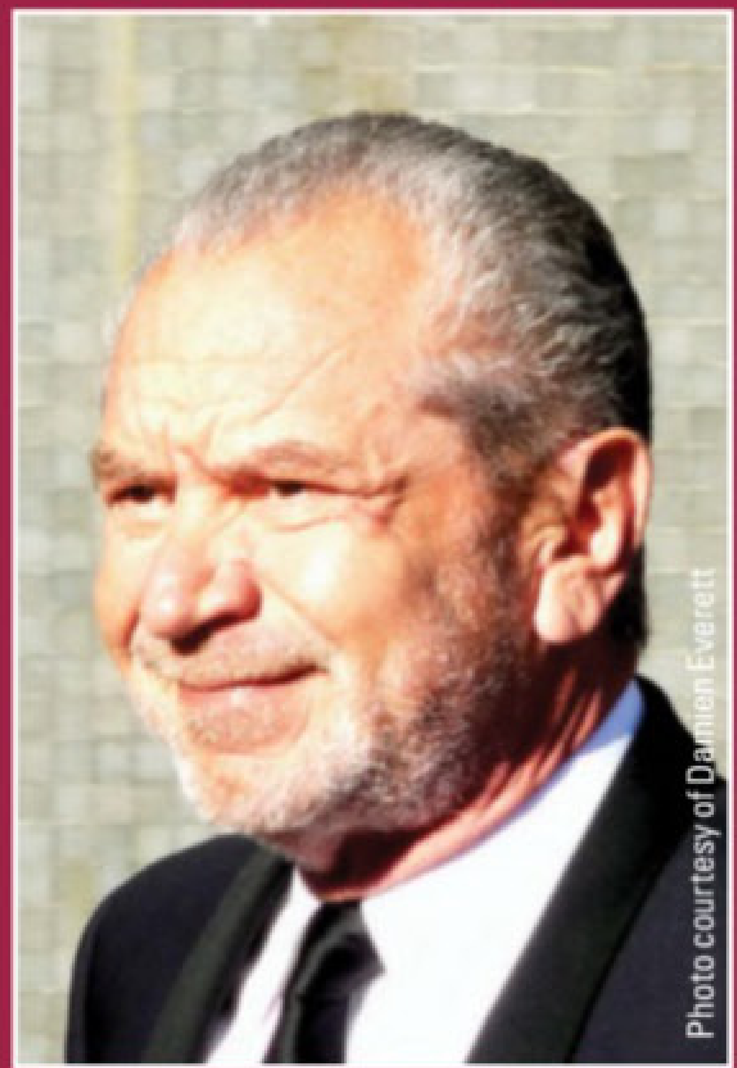
But the story started in 1983 when Sugar – or Lord Sugar as he is known today – was in rather bullish mood, buoyed by considerable sales of his range of hi-fis. These all-in-one units did away with having to buy separate record players, tape decks and radio receivers and it was this allied with the Apple II clones that Amstrad was repeatedly offered for rebadging on its purchasing trips to the Far East that got the London entrepreneur's brain whirring. Lord Sugar felt there was a gap in the market that he could fill.

"So many computers were being aimed at people into technology but the market for the CPC was the lorry driver and his mate," says former group technical manager Roland Perry. "The idea was that the CPC should be a complete ready-to-



LORD ALAN SUGAR

Lord Alan Sugar is not known for his forgiving, sentimental nature but, exactly 30 years after he launched the CPC 464, he took to Twitter to profess: "11 Apr 1984 was a proud day for me". It led to a number of fellow users pointing out that Amstrad is no more today but Lord Sugar hit back. "Many asking 'Where is Amstrad now?'", he wrote. "I sold Amstrad to Sky for £125m in 2007". We briefly caught up with him about the time in between


Photo courtesy of Damien Everett

Why did you decide to enter the home computer market?
I spotted that this was a massive growth market and it had suppliers that tried to make it sound like they were offering something special where hardware was concerned. They weren't. We took what we knew in consumer electronics and recognised that we could make them easily and add features and value to make the unit look like a computer and not a pregnant calculator.

Did you have a strong idea about what you wanted the computer to be?
A value-for-money unit that offered a fully integrated system of monitor and data recorder so that you didn't have to plug it into a television.

Was it important for the Amstrad CPC 464 to be an all-rounder?
We made the computer look like a computer and that is what the consumer warmed to as it was not only a good product but it showed true value for money and [consumer's felt] they were buying a real good lump of hardware.

Were you surprised at its take-up, especially in France?
The computer took off well in France as it was a serious looking machine. It became one of our biggest markets.

Why did you buy Sinclair?
We bought Sinclair for its name but also to transform the unit with an integrated data recorder and to make it a proper computer. That's why we sold millions of them and followed on in other markets with the Sinclair success of branding. It allowed Amstrad to move on to more serious computing.

30 years on and people are still writing games for the CPC – did you ever expect that?
It is absolutely fascinating to see that the CPC still has a following 30 years on.



» Amstrad snapped up Sinclair, thereby swallowing it's closest British rival – angering Speccy fans in the process.



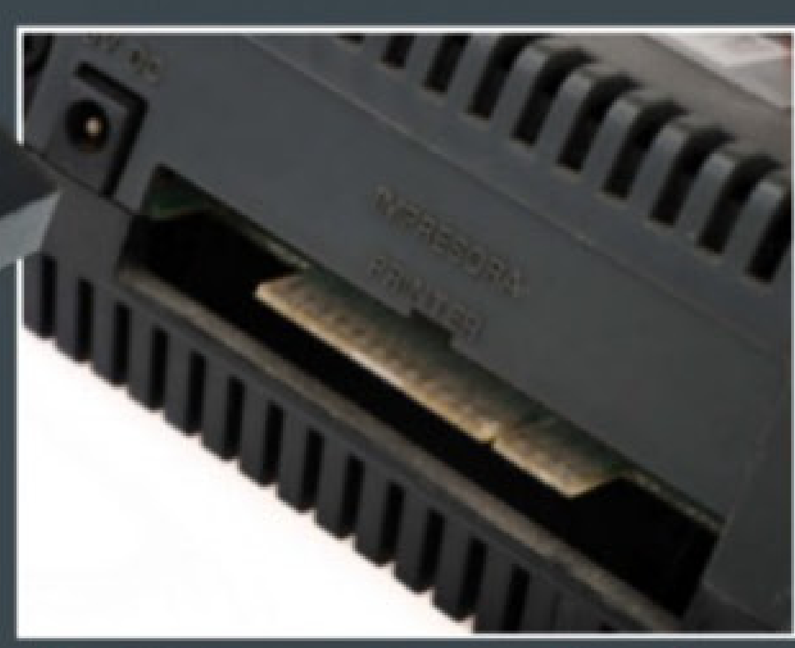
» A big thanks to www.consolepassion.co.uk for kindly lending us a machine for hardware shots. Thanks guys.

go machine; that you shouldn't have to roll around the floor plugging and unplugging things."

With this in mind, the CPC team aimed for simplicity. Lord Sugar had no experience of making computers so he assembled a team that could. Key players were Roland and his childhood friend, William Poel, both of whom were interested in computing and had lots of electronics experience. They took inspiration from the ZX Spectrum and C64, pitching a machine into the same bracket with similar specifications, and by the end of 1983 a prototype was ready.

"We had a prototype at Insight Software in St Helens," says programmer Paul Hughes. "It was pretty much of the final form factor when we got it, bar some bits Dremeled out where the mouldings didn't quite fit. If I remember correctly, there were some extra components and wires soldered on to the PCB to fix teething problems before final manufacture but, all in all, it was pretty much there."

The CPC 464 was unveiled in Westminster School, London, on 10 and 11 April. It had an integrated tape deck and 64K of RAM, expandable to 512K – dK'Tronics sold memory packs but no games took advantage. It allowed for 27 colours in three different resolutions: 160x200 with the use of 16 colours on the screen at once, 320x200 with four colours and 640x200 with two colours (more commonly known as modes 0, 1 and 2). It ran with a 4MHz Z80 processor (in line with the Spectrum) running at 3.3MHz due to tech restrictions created to avoid display snowing. It had an AY-3-8912 sound chip that was nowhere near as good as the celebrated SID chip of the Commodore 64, but


» Like other 8-bit computers, it was possible to add a number of useful peripherals to the CPC.


» As you may have guessed, this is actually a Spanish CPC 464, giving a good indication of the machine's global reach.



> **The CPC also came with a welcome tape which I wrote with my fair hands**
> Roland Perry



headphones could be plugged in for stereo sound. There were colourful keys on the dark grey keyboard. The CPC would output PAL-frequency analogue RGB to the boxy, 14-inch monitor via a 6-pin DIN connector. The monitor also contained the power supply. Later, a bundled TV receiver peripheral was released that allowed the monitor to tune into analogue television signals. "The CPC also came with a welcome tape which I wrote with my fair hands," recalls Roland. "You'd insert that, press Play and it would load and you'd see whizzy rays of sun. It looked like it was doing something straight away."

Software was important for Amstrad, the company figuring that the CPC needed a good range of readily available titles from day one. The CPC 464 came with 12 titles that the company claimed was worth more than £100. They included *Roland In The Caves* and *Roland On The Ropes* – two titles from a series named after Roland Perry – as well as *Bridge-It*, *Oh Mummy*, *Harrier Attack*, *The Galactic Plague*, *Sultan's Maze*, *Fruit Machine* and *Xanagrams*. It also came with the word processor, Easi-Amsword. "We distributed between 40 and 50 prototypes to developers and they busily converted Spectrum and C64 games," continues Roland. Amstrad founded a publisher called Amsoft to sell titles for the CPC 464 and it helped stoke the fires of competition. Indeed, when Acorn took out ads that quoted reports about the unreliability of Spectrums, much to Sir Clive Sinclair's ire, Amsoft commissioned a game called *Business Is War* to parody the fight between the two. Programmer Marcus Altman of Alligata had a disaster and lost the source code so it was never released but lots of other games were. "One of the objectives was to launch the computer with 50 games available," says Roland. "You couldn't just launch a computer and say there would be lots of games along for it real soon – you had to produce the whole package."

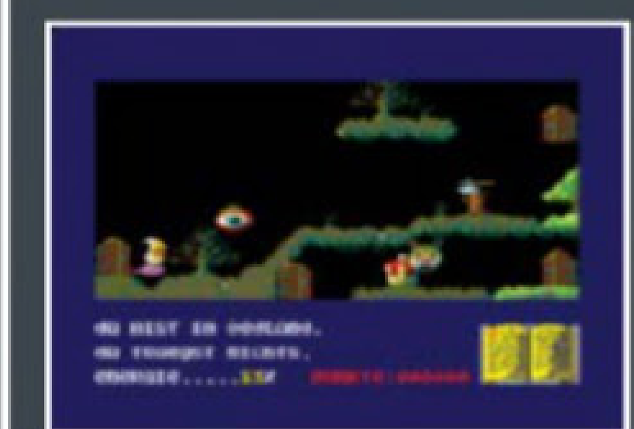
Spectrum ports were not to everyone's taste, though. Games converted directly from Sinclair's machines to the Amstrad were often slower and had fewer colours. The similarity between the two machines was one of the reasons why developers ported but time and cost were the overriding factors. Porting marred games such as *Strider*, *Hard Drivin'* and *Vendetta*, but without it such games may never have seen the light of day on the Amstrad. The CPC was the subservient machine in terms of sales in the UK and it wasn't always easy to produce Amstrad versions. "I found creating loading screens on the Amstrad a bit harder than making something on the Speccy," says graphic artist Mark Jones who produced the Mag Max loading screen for the CPC. "Not only did I have to work in colour, which I hadn't done before, I had about three days to do it. Simon Butler gave me a crash course on anti-aliasing, where you put colour between two touching colours to make the lines less jagged, and away I went. You never had to anti-alias with the Speccy." It was notable that in Spain and France where the Amstrad dominated, porting was far less common.



» Roland Perry was the technical guru brought in to work on the CPC 464. He worked on all of the other CPCs too.

KEY EXCLUSIVES

Five fantastic games that helped define the CPC range



SORCERY+

PUBLISHER: Virgin/Amsoft
GENRE: Arcade adventure
RELEASED: 1985

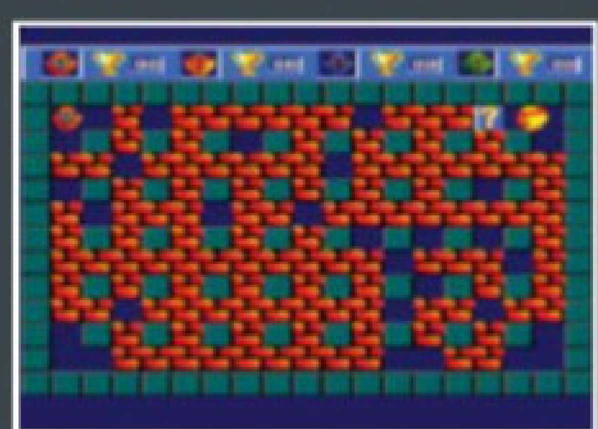
■ *Sorcery* was good; *Sorcery+* was better. In adding new screens and developing an extra chapter, Virgin put together a gripping, smooth and addictive disk-only sorcerer adventure that beat the original in every way possible. It combined the CPC's low-res Mode 0 with a higher-res Mode 1 making for absolutely perfect presentation.



GET DEXTER

PUBLISHER: ERE Informatique
GENRE: Graphic adventure
RELEASED: 1986

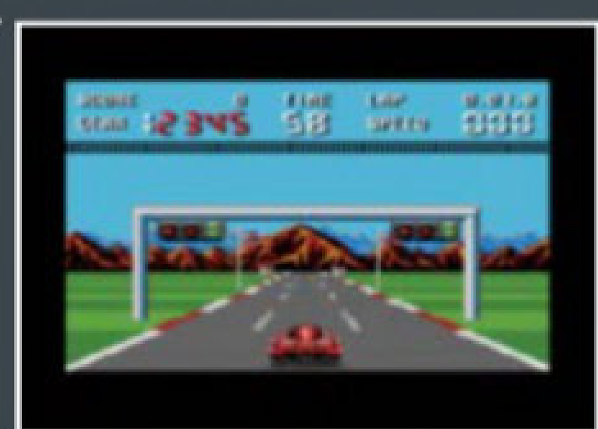
■ Made in France, the CPC's primary market – and where this game was known as *Crafton & Xunk – Get Dexter* was an isometric, puzzle-solving adventure exclusive to the CPC for around a year. Well-loved, its intricate nature stood it out: destroy a robot, for example, and it exploded with a splash, making the floor mightily slippy for poor Dexter.



MEGA BLASTERS

PUBLISHER: Radical Software
GENRE: Action
RELEASED: 1988

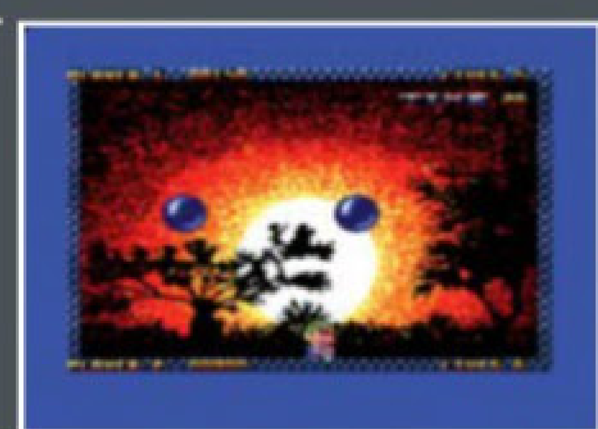
■ Sold towards the end of the CPC's life via mail order, *Mega Blasters* – a clone of *Super Bomberman* – became so highly regarded, it was named the best Amstrad game of all time by members of the CPC Wiki. It's a mega game in every sense, it was spread over 90 levels and it took in 11 worlds. Given it took up 900K of data, it was disk-only.



BURNIN' RUBBER

PUBLISHER: Ocean Software
GENRE: Driving RELEASED: 1990

■ Amstrad needed a title that could be bundled with the GX4000 and Plus range of computers and it found it in *Burnin' Rubber*. Graphically head-turning but sonically ear bending, it was made by Ocean. The dev team seemed to unleash its creativity to produce the best-looking Amstrad game at the time. It boasted subtle shading and had a distinct 16-bit feel.



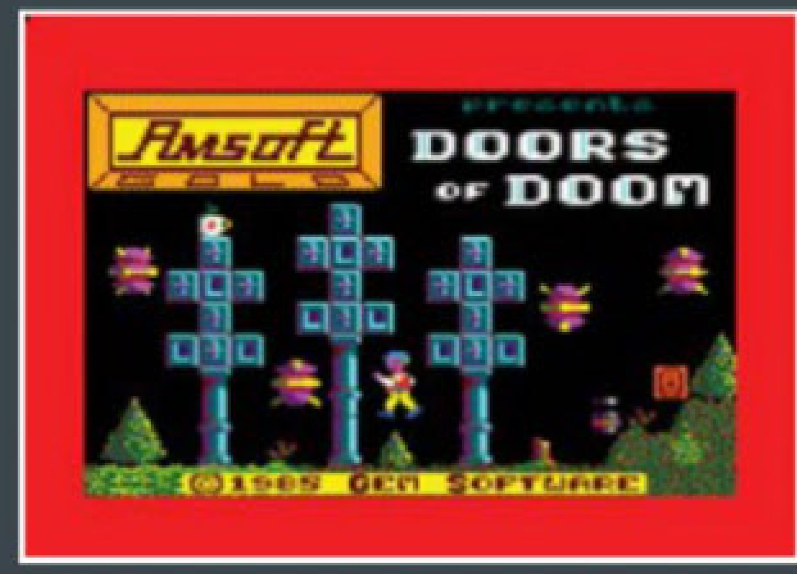
ZAP'T'BALLS

PUBLISHER: Elmsoft
GENRE: Arcade RELEASED: 1992

■ *Pang* was released solely on cartridge when the ball-popping game finally surfaced on the Amstrad so Elmsoft stepped forward with a CPC version that looked anything but normal. With experience in the boundary-pushing demo scene, Elmar Krieger gave the game a graphical flourish, yet the gameplay was criticised in the UK – much to the annoyance of European CPCers.



» The built-in tape deck proved so popular for Amstrad that it did exactly the same thing when it released the ZX Spectrum +2.



» [Amstrad CPC] Amsoft's *Doors Of Doom* was a decent platform-style game that proved to be rather difficult going.



» [Amstrad CPC] With big name backing, games like *Space Gun* showed the capabilities of the Amstrad CPC.

Amstrad did try and encourage original games, though. Lord Sugar invited the top software publishers to his offices in Brentwood, Essex. He took them to a warehouse where he showed them the CPC 464 hoping to persuade them to develop but although many were impressed, even by March 1985, games for the CPC were hard to come by, making Amsoft even more crucial. One of those in attendance at that meeting was Geoff Brown, founder of US Gold. "I had never met Alan Sugar before then but I had heard about his blunt speaking reputation," he says. "It was obvious he knew nothing about computers, except selling them, and nothing about the games industry or its game fans." Geoff told Lord Sugar about the coin-op conversion of *OutRun* which had zoomed to the top of the charts for other formats. He told the Amstrad boss he would go back to Sega and ask for extra permission to port the game to the CPC 464. "He snarled back, 'bloody driving game; we can easily get one of those written, no problem'," says Geoff. "He told me he didn't need coin-op conversions or licences." The big games did eventually come in droves, though. Indeed, *OutRun* became one of the biggest successes on the Amstrad in 1987. Sadly, it was an awful conversion with a slow pace and ugly sound effects.

> **"I had never met Alan Sugar before then but I had heard about his blunt reputation"**
> Geoff Brown

By this time, the CPC had evolved into a small family. The CPC 664 was identical to the 464 except it came with a disc drive instead of tape (and was incredibly ugly with light blue keys). It was ditched within months to make way for the 128K CPC 6128. Other than the extra memory and the disk drive, it retained the core of the 464's tech complete with monitor and it retailed for £299 (green screen) and £399 (colour). It also had a tape port so that a cassette deck could be plugged in. Gamers could enjoy the likes of *Doors Of Doom*, *Hunchback I* and *II*, *Roland In Time*, *Nomad*, *Supertest – Day 1* and *Day 2*, *Quabbalah*, *Tubaruba*, *World Series Baseball*, *Monopoly*, *Cluedo*, *Scalextric*, *Scrabble* and *Trivial Pursuit*, a rather solid selection of games that proved to be a reasonably good introduction to the CPC.

Both the 464 and 6128 proved to be an eventual hit for software developers. Ocean Software's David Ward said the Amstrad user base was newer and more active than those of other machines. "They buy more software," he said. Most games were released on both tape and disc in the UK but in France discs were more popular so many of their releases did not get an airing on tape and they tended to be 128K-only.

There was a feeling at times that the CPC was a money-making machine first and foremost, though. Lord Sugar was never interested in producing a cutting edge computer ("It doesn't put money in the bank," he told *Amstrad Action*) and he wasn't particularly interested in market share even though, by 1985, the Amstrad CPC had 25 per cent of the market ("I could have 100 per cent of the market in thimble holders but it wouldn't make me any money, would it?" he said). Neither, it seems, was Lord Sugar all that interested in powering up the blue

THE CPC RANGE



CPC 464

■ From the early white prototypes came the dark grey 464. Boasting a Z80A processor, 64K RAM, 27 colours, three screen modes ranging from 160x200 to 640x200 and support for up to two joysticks, buyers had a choice of colour or green monitor. And gamers cried if their parents got the latter.



CPC 664

■ The 664 was an ugly, 3-inch disc drive version of its cassette-based sister with some lurid blue keys and the same 64K of memory. It remained on the shelves for just five months and sold 10,000 units. But it introduced AMSDOS and came with CP/M 2.2, and it allowed games to run faster.



CPC 6128

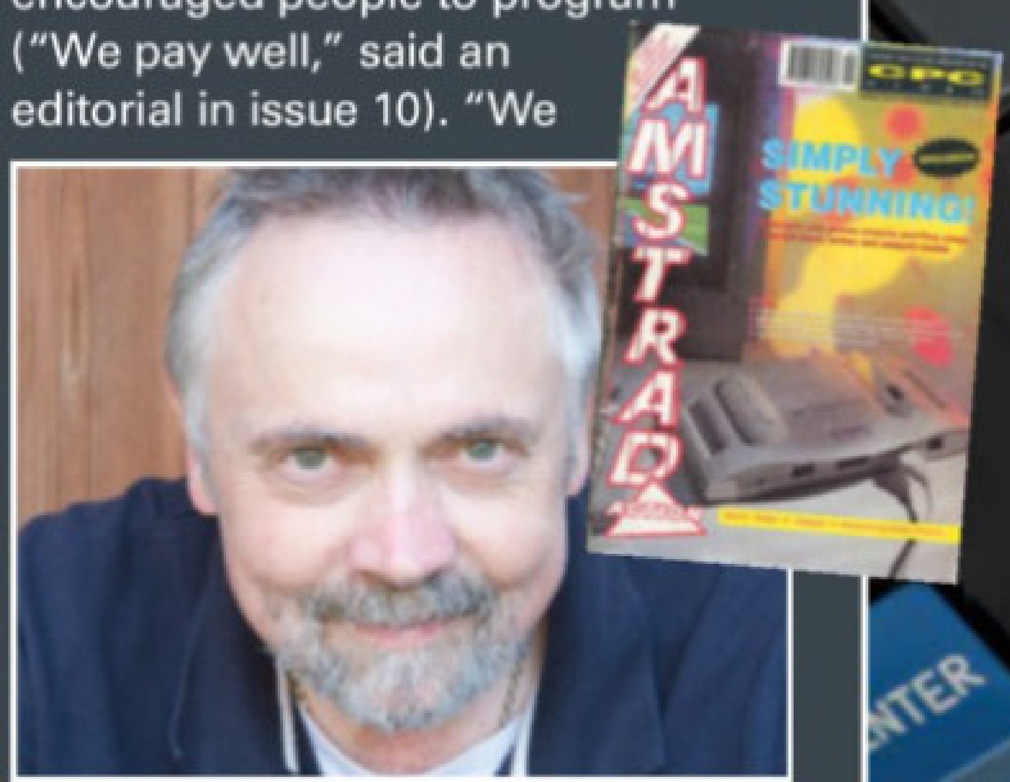
■ A slimmer and more stylish computer than the 664, the 6128 doubled the memory and removed the colourful keys, making for a more serious-looking offering. "It's definitely not a Mickey Mouse machine," Lord Sugar said at the time. It became the computer of choice in France with some great, disc-only exclusives being made.

Photo courtesy of Bill Bertram



screen himself. Roland says Lord Sugar did not have a 464 on his desk but that he never expected him to. "Does the MD of a bicycle factory have to ride a bike to work?" Roland asks. "He can afford a Jaguar with a chauffeur. Alan was not the target market for the computer and he was building machines for other people, not himself."

But for those who used the machine, it opened up creative possibilities thanks to Amstrad wanting to have as open a system as possible. "We wanted people to use the machine and not feel that what was happening inside it was mysterious," says Roland. It worked well. "The CPC sat nicely in the midst of the computers that came out in the Eighties," says developer Philip Oliver. "It was cheaper and more accessible than a BBC Micro, with a better keyboard and graphics than a Spectrum. It was more British (and better) than the Commodore 64. We used the CPC to develop *Super Robin Hood* and we led on the CPC for all our games after that." To foster loyalty to the CPC and lend a helping hand, Amstrad formed an Amstrad User Club. It included a subscription to *Amstrad Computer User* magazine, which encouraged people to program ("We pay well," said an editorial in issue 10). "We paid a lot of attention to making a computer that people could program themselves," said Roland. "The manual wasn't just about telling you where to plug things – it had a lot of stuff about Locomotive BASIC and it had tutorials. Programming was important to us."



» Rod Lawton was *Amstrad Action*'s longest serving editor from December 1989 to February 1993.

The main independent publication, *Amstrad Action*, was also instrumental in building support but former editor Rod Lawton was acutely aware that the CPC was often given a rough ride. "We got on pretty well with the Spectrum community, even though we thought the computers (and the users) were a bit weird," he says. "It seemed all right for geeks and home programmers, but we thought the CPC was more of a finished product. The C64 was a different kettle of fish. It was an American import, it was used by gaming fans who thought they were a cut above the rest of the 8-bit community, and we kept our distance. They were like, 'yeah, obviously, the C64 is much better for games,' and we were like, 'yeah, whatever'."

By 1990, six years after the CPC 464 had launched and five years after the 6128, Amstrad took the range in a new direction. Noticing the console market was growing, it redesigned the casing of the two machines and added a cartridge slot. The computers were relaunched as the 464 Plus and the 6128 Plus and there was a standalone console called the GX4000 that was styled like a spaceship. Suddenly, Amstrad wanted something more cutting edge – except it failed to deliver.

"All kinds of people were trying to adapt their general purpose computer designs to compete with games consoles so we tried the same," says Roland. "I think, in hindsight, that the only thing to do was design a console from scratch and not try to bolt functionality to what we had."



» The colours were garish, but having a built-in tape deck was extremely useful. It was surprsingly hardy as well.

The computers ran into problems straight away. A handful of existing games were not compatible which deterred a few potential upgraders. The 6128 Plus did not have a cassette deck port. But the instant loading cartridge slot, the 4,096-colour palette and the 16 hardware sprites, hardware scrolling, programmable interrupts and DMA for the AY soundchip certainly pushed the new CPCs closer to the Atari ST and Amiga. The bundled game, *Burnin' Rubber*, looked delicious.

It wasn't enough. Poor sales of the computers and the console – which was being discounted by £30 within six months – ensured there were too few games (and those that were released tended to be ports). The CPC was no more and Amstrad moved on. Developers found a way of harnessing the Plus capabilities with disc and tape-based games which ensured buyers hadn't wasted their money (benefiting from *Space Gun*, *Fluff* and *Prehistorik 2* among others) but it was clear the 8-bit era had come to a close.

During the Eighties, though, the CPC had become France's best-selling computer. The range had swallowed up 50 per cent of the market, selling 650,000 machines. In total, the CPC sold 3 million across the world and while that was fewer than the 17 million C64s and 5 million Spectrums, it was enough to ensure it was the third 8-bit machine and enough to declare it a resounding success.



464 PLUS

■ In 1990, Amstrad replaced the CPC range with the restyled Plus machines. The 464 Plus looked Amiga-esque and it had a slot for cartridge games as well as a tape deck. It came with a game controller paddle, the game *Burnin' Rubber* and a monitor. The Plus features allowed the use of a palette of 4,096 colours.



6128 PLUS

■ Like the 464 Plus, the 6128 Plus was basically the old CPC 6128 in a new style with a cartridge slot. The extra capabilities were supposed to be for cartridge games only but programmers were able to get around that. The 6128 Plus did not have a tape deck port, which persuaded a fair few against upgrading.



GX4000

■ Amstrad's 8-bit console had a Z80A processor running at 4MHz – identical to the CPC – but it had a Direct Memory Access controller so music could be played without burdening the processor. With 18 hardware sprites, 4,096 colours (32 displayable at once) and smooth scrolling, it would have been a hit – five years earlier.



CPC 472

■ It claimed to have 72K of RAM but it only allowed 64K to be accessed and it was designed to get around Spanish import tax laws. It said the extra memory supported BASIC. It didn't. The 474 did include the CPC 664 ROM with Locomotive BASIC 1.1, though. And Spanish keyboard versions added a statutory 'tilde' key.

Photo courtesy of Evan Amos

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come



INFO

- » **Featured System:** PS2
- » **Year:** 2006
- » **Publisher:** Capcom
  Ready At Dawn (Wii)
  HexaDrive (PS3)
- » **Developer:** Clover Studio
- » **Key People:**
  Hideki Kamiya,
  Atsushi Inaba

GO DEEPER

» The original prototype for *Okami* featured a realistic wolf and lifelike environments. With more of a simulation slant, the game was deemed boring, hence the striking visuals and creative gameplay of the final release.

» Look closely at the box art for the US Wii re-release and you'll spot a major slip-up on Capcom's part – that artwork used features an obvious watermark from a fairly sizeable gaming site. How did nobody spot that?



» [PS2] Explore and you'll find optional bosses and challenge rooms all over the place. You might have to return to them after levelling up…

91. OKAMI

A commercial flop but one of the most positively received PS2 games, Okami was an artistic twist on the 3D Zelda template. Luke Albigés revisits Clover's beautiful penultimate project

THE BACKGROUND

Ever since *Ocarina Of Time*, the *Zelda* games have been a benchmark for epic 3D adventures. Many had tried to mimic this success on other platforms but almost all had failed – while seemingly effortless for Nintendo, that kind of magic had proven practically unattainable for anyone else. Enter Clover Studio, a small team formed of Capcom's brightest stars of the time and even with only cult hit *Viewtiful Joe* under its collective belt, the talented troupe was ready to take the fight to Link. Its weapon of choice? A paintbrush, an implement both in keeping with the unique visual style of *Okami* and perfectly placed to empower players with the same kind of creative expression in manipulating the game world as the developers showed in building it. Between the beautiful sumi-e art style and the themes of nature running throughout the game, *Okami* was a breath of fresh air in a market that had just begun to thrive through trading in explosions and chasing realism above all else. Surrounded by man-with-gun covers, what hope did a cel-shaded game where the main character was a wolf who had to run around making flowers bloom ever really have of making its mark? With development costs rising by the day, we may never see a risk on this level again. But if we don't, at least we can be happy that Capcom, for whatever reason, saw fit to publish this stunning adventure.

THE GAME

Often referenced as the best *Zelda* game that doesn't star Link, *Okami* has developed something of a cult following and it isn't hard to see why. *Zelda* comparisons are impossible to avoid when the game borrows so heavily from the formula Nintendo spent years perfecting, although it'd be unfair to call Clover's classic a mere imitator. There's a synergy in *Okami*'s mechanics, lore and art that is rare in even the most successful games – everything just gels so perfectly. Having to restore the faith of the people in a slumbering

Things of note



Praise Be!

Completing side quests or incidental tasks earns Praise, a currency of sorts. The system is both logical and conducive to promoting exploration of (and involvement in) the world.



Wolf Among Us

A goddess in wolf form, Amaterasu isn't your typical action game star. From mobility to combat, Ammy feels unique and has pace and style that most heroes could only dream of.



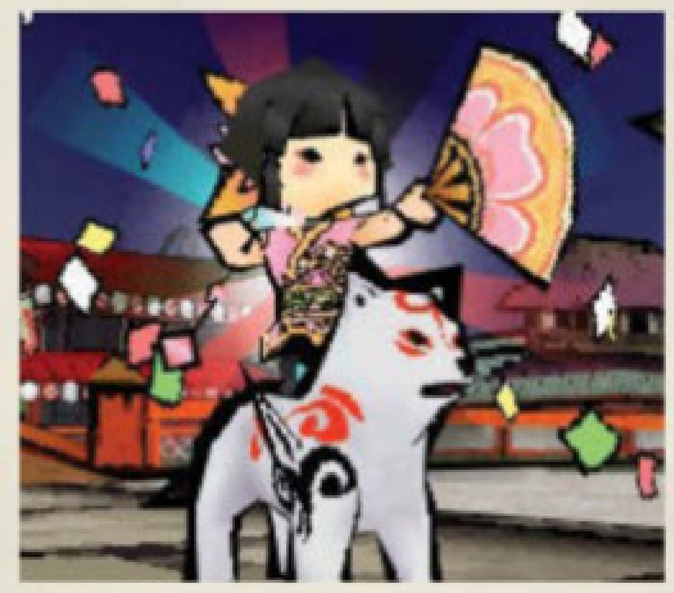
Brush Strokes

Using an in-game brush to bring the world to life and summon objects into it was, if you'll excuse the pun, a stroke of genius. Gestures could be used for both exploration and combat.



Feed The World

Regular people aren't exactly uncommon in the game but this is a world where animals rule. Seek out and aid packs of wild creatures and you'll earn additional Praise.



Slight Return

Despite disappointing sales, *Okami* still managed to spawn a sequel. DS follow-up *Okamiden* went for a super-cute chibi style and sold even worse than the original.



» [PS2] The three weapon types all handle very differently, although a second can also be equipped as a sub-weapon for versatility.



» [WII] Cutscenes often incorporate brush techniques, allowing Ammy to influence the world.

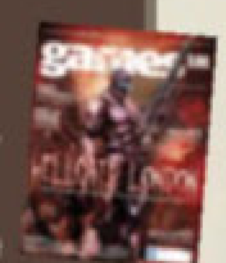


» [PS2] Bosses are on the whole excellent – this clash with primary antagonist Orochi is a clear highlight.

What the press thought



Play
Score: 95%
"The perfect marriage of style and substance, a lively, inventive and satisfying game wrapped up in the most impressive and striking visual style of any game on the PS2."



games™
Score: 9/10
"There's something oddly noble about *Okami*. The bottom line: this is a game you can really care about."

deity long since forgotten means that powering up and regaining abilities feels like part of the narrative rather than an arbitrary videogame trope, while gifting players the same brush that was seemingly used to paint the world is both ingenious and empowering. General combat is incredibly basic in *Okami*, to the point of *Dynasty Warriors* simplicity. But through the ability to draw to life such aids as cherry bombs, tornados or flash fires via an in-game brush, a whole spectrum of depth is added. And with each enemy type offering rewards when slain with certain techniques, Clover managed to push players towards a more creative and experimental approach (in line with the game's style) without ever forcing it upon them.

By isolating encounters to single arenas, Clover was able to offer immediate feedback on just how well players had performed in any given fight – another reason to find and exploit enemy weaknesses. It's something we've seen the Clover vets use since in games like *Bayonetta* and *Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance* and it was every bit as effective in promoting self-improvement then as it is now. But perhaps more interesting is the way in which brush skills can be used out of battle. A slashed rock might offer hidden items or a secret area to explore; circling wilting flora with the brush could open up a new route when the whole area springs back into colourful life; conjuring forth inky fire might just lead you to a missing trinket. The world Clover crafted would be a joy to explore even without this layer of interactivity. But with it, there are so many suspicious things to hit, slash, burn, blow and bomb that you could play for weeks and still end up missing stuff.

Couple this with huge areas to explore, devious puzzles to solve and some clever boss battles and you've got an adventure that will clearly hold up for years to come – the recent (and well received) PS3 HD re-release proves this perfectly. It may not have made Capcom millions, but *Okami* stands to be a firm fan favourite all the same – it's like the opposite of *Resident Evil 6* in that regard.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

Thanks to its art style, *Okami* stands the test of time (and will continue to do so) far better than most 3D games of the time, and even the 3D *Zelda* games. Upscaled to HD on PS3, it's beautiful, but even on the old hardware, the art direction still holds up. The PS2, for all its Emotion Engine waffle, was no more capable of photorealism than the 2600 and while those who chased that distant dream have fallen from memory, *Okami*'s unique style still stands out. Game design proves every bit as timeless as the unique visual approach, too – *Okami* is a great game whichever way you slice it and it's a real shame that it arrived on the eve of PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360. With piggy banks filling up ready for new consoles at the time, it's no real surprise that a game about a wolf with a frisbee on its back didn't sell particularly well. Still, the fact that Capcom saw fit to honour the game with a 'sequel' and the fact that Amaterasu made it into *Marvel Vs Capcom 3* should prove to some degree that *Okami* isn't the failure it seemed at the time – loved by many, Ammy will live long in the hearts of gamers. *



THE Bluffer's guide TO

FOOTBALL GAMES

Ah, the beautiful game. The every mention of its name can incite a romantic sporting notion into even the most steadfast Millwall fan. Lionel Messi, Jules Rimet, the Racecourse Ground on a cold and wet November Wednesday night, little boys and jumpers for goalposts and last-minute winners in the FA Cup. Ever since the dawn of videogames, developers have sought to emulate football's clean, flowing splendour and visceral excitement. Graeme Mason readies the magic sponge as we trace the history of digitised football games

1973-2013 SEASON



Take a snapshot of any pub in the United Kingdom on a Friday or Saturday night and there's a fair chance that two or more people will be engaged in a passionate discussion on what the Americans insistently refer to as "soccer". Bolstered by the advent of the English Premier League in 1992, football has totally dominated the sporting landscape in the UK over the last 22 years. Granted, there are plenty of rugby and cricket fans, as well as numerous other sports. But nothing comes close to the enduring, fervent support of the UK's favourite game, despite the disappointments and general incompetence of the home nation teams.

The grace and excitement of football has long been dreamed of in videogame form – and occasionally the brute force and violence as well. And contrary to an opinion held by no doubt many, ahem, younger gamers today, football videogames do not start and end with Electronic Arts' behemoth *FIFA*. Since the Seventies the sport has been emulated on-screen, with varying degrees of success and with each decade bringing more innovation and gameplay as technology advanced. Yet even today, opinion on what makes a good football game still varies. Says Dino Dini, author of the *Kick Off* series: "Football is firstly a game of skill, secondly a game of tactics and thirdly a game of personalities and spectacle. A good football game must honour these priorities." In the other half are opinions such as Jim Bagley's, coder of games such as *Ultimate Soccer* on the Master System and *Striker* on the Mega Drive. "To me a football game was always about fast and powerful players sprinting up the field or giving it a big kick and impossibly curving the ball around the goalie and into the back of the net. All fast action – because after all, it's a game!" So two disparate views from 2014 – but what was the first football game?

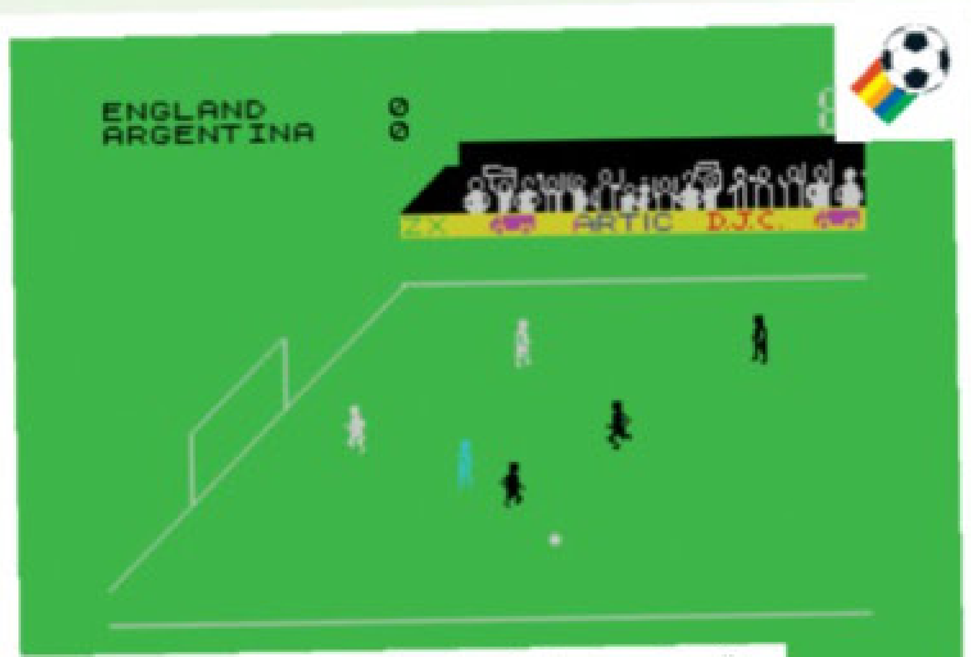
Like many fellow sports such as tennis and squash, most likely the first home consoles to feature football games were the early *Pong* systems. One of the most popular *Pong* clone machines (certainly in the UK) was from Binatone. Formed in London in 1958, principally as an electronics importer, Binatone took advantage of the videogame craze to create a series of plug-in consoles the most famous of which was the TV Master range. Undisputedly simple by today's standards, its football games were merely a variation on the *Pong* theme themselves stemming from early arcade games such as Ramtek's *Soccer* from 1973. Ralph Baer's iconic Magnavox Odyssey system also featured a soccer cartridge in 1974 (which replaced Football in European territories and is one of the rarest Odyssey carts) and in 1976 when, ▶



» [Amstrad] The C64 got *International Soccer*, the Spectrum *Match Day* and the Amstrad *Amstrad Soccer*.







» [Spectrum] Artic's *World Cup Football* was eaten alive by *Match Day*, but would see the light of day again…



» [Magnavox Odyssey] No more bats in Magnavox's 1976 *Hockey! / Soccer!*.

KNOW YOUR FOOTBALL GAMES

TACKLING

■ Whether it be a full-blooded sliding tackle or a surreptitious foot-in, if you haven't got the ball, the tackle is the best way to get it back. It's a staple mechanic of any good football game.

BALL CONTROL

■ The instant stickable ball of the majority of arcade football games or the trickier method of *Kick Off*; you can't kick it unless you've got it. Either way, good ball control is crucial to success.

COMMENTARY

■ A relatively modern feature, the custom commentary made its debut as larger capacity disc systems came to the fore in the mid-Nineties. Motty remains our fave.

AFTER TOUCH

■ Or rather, bend it like Beckham. Often the only way to defeat skillful goalkeepers, after touch allows players to bend and swerve the ball around the custodian and into the net for spectacular goals.

THROUGH BALL

■ In other words, pass into space, ideally for another player to run on to and score or assist, often with spectacular results.

MOTION CAPTURE

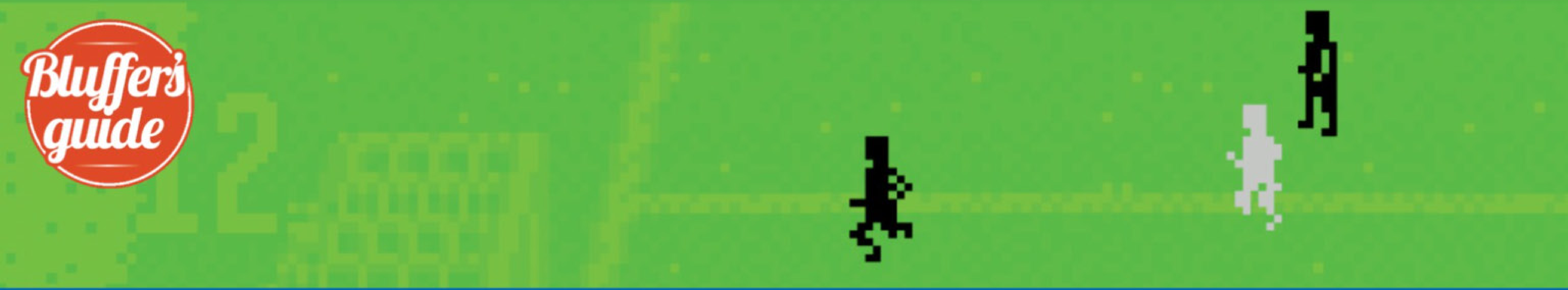
■ From 1995's *Actua Soccer* onwards the majority of football games, as they strove for more realism, employed this technique in some form or another.

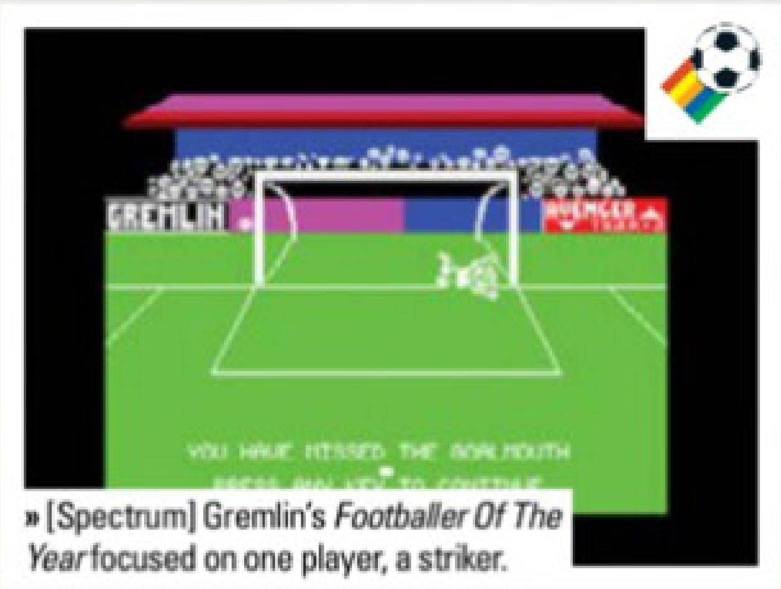
TACTICS

■ Leaving the in-depth tweaking to games such as *Championship Manager*, most action soccer games incorporate some form of tactical input, even if it's as basic as choosing a formation or style of play.

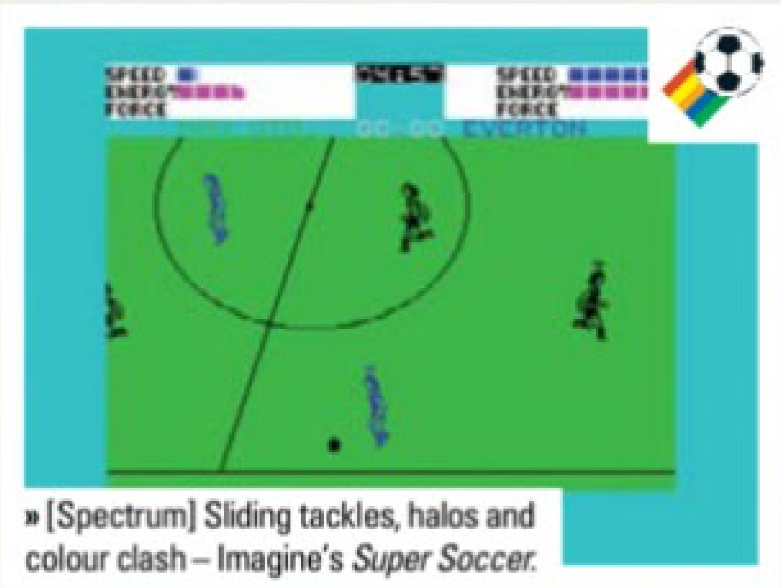
A VIEW TO A GOAL

■ Whether side-on, top-down or isometric, each method has its pros and cons – and great games.





» [Spectrum] Gremlin's *Footballer Of The Year* focused on one player, a striker.



» [Spectrum] Sliding tackles, halos and colour clash – Imagine's *Super Soccer*.





» [Spectrum] *Match Day 2* contained many improvements over the original best-seller.

▶ on the Odyssey 500, it became the first football game to replace the bats with player-like graphics.

The majority of these *Pong* clones simply multiplied the number of bats, giving each player one defender (or goalkeeper) and an attacker. The open area behind each goalkeeper was greatly reduced in order to create a goal, and the ball randomly thrown in by the computer at the start with the idea to simply maneuver the ball past the opposition bats and into the goal. Despite their simplicity these games worked well as football adapted easily to the existing template. There was naturally a total lack of any of the complexities of the game, but two-player matches could still generate considerable excitement and the popularity of them ensured that each generation of subsequent consoles and computers would contain many versions of arcade football.

In 1977, Atari released its successful VCS and surprisingly (or perhaps not, considering its country of origin) it took three years for a soccer game to appear on the console and it featured one of the first individual brandings from a famous player, arguably the most famous of all. *Pele's Soccer* may not have been a particularly accurate emulation of the sport – each team only featured four players and there were no throw-ins, fouls or free kicks – but it sold well enough and the console would see further speculative halfway-line efforts such as *International Soccer* in 1982 (actually a conversion of the Intellivision's *NASL Soccer*, minus the licence) and *RealSports Soccer* a year later, which changed the method of movement from vertical to horizontal and greatly improved the graphics.

The Intellivision's *NASL Soccer* was a trailblazer in other respects. It was the first football videogame to receive an official licence from one of the sport's governing bodies; it was one of the first games to employ a horizontally-scrolling playing area with the pitch 'shrinking' into the screen (although when it was converted to the VCS in 1982, it was decided to change this to vertical overhead, possibly to make it similar to the best-selling *Pele's Soccer*); and the range of buttons on the Intellivision's unfairly maligned controller gave the game a set of options rarely seen before with pass and shoot buttons and the ability to control the goalkeeper. In addition, the game was exceedingly playable, although the lack of a one-player option hampered its success.

The advent of home computers in the early Eighties predictably incited a slew of football games, but many of these earlier offerings were mere 'stickmen' graphically and with little control over proceedings. This period was also notable for the introduction of Kevin Toms' *Football Manager* series (although we'll be looking at this sprawling side of the genre in a later issue). There were exceptions to the stickmen of course, especially on the relatively powerful Commodore 64 computer, with *International Soccer*, written by Andrew Spencer and released by Commodore itself, proving to have immense staying power and remaining one of the most popular games on the computer for some time, despite a lack of options such as a league or cup competition. The



» [C64] *Kick Off* was not well-received on the Commodore 64.



» [Amstrad] Arcade conversion *Fighting Soccer* actually involved no or little fighting.

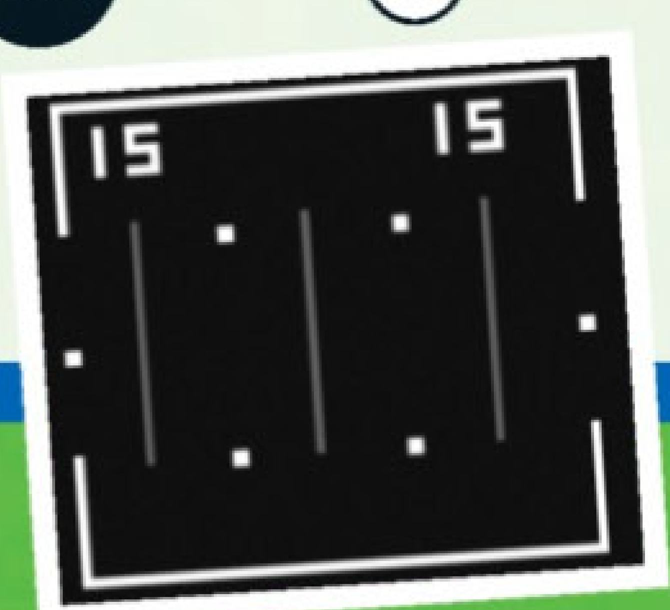
C64's great rival, the ZX Spectrum, had to make do with games such as Artic's *World Cup Football*, which in addition to an above-average score of 71% in *Crash* magazine, benefited from a lack of competition on the Sinclair machine. "Very original, at least as far as the Spectrum goes," noted one reviewer while praising the "very good" graphics and scrolling pitch. *World Cup Football*, unlike *Football Manager* (to which it was

SELECTED TIMELINE

1973 – 1974 – 1975 – 1976 – 1977 – 1978 – 1979 – 1980 – 1981

1973: RAMTEK SOCCER

■ Likely the first football videogame, it was in reality *Pong*, only with more bats and less open space behind them.



1976: SOCCER

■ *Pong*-like bats are finally replaced by player-like graphics on the latest Magnavox system, the Odyssey 500.

1979: ATARI SOCCER

■ The first football game to be housed in a cocktail-style arcade cabinet that gave players a chance to literally go head-to-head.

1979: HOCKEY! / SOCCER!

■ Magnavox releases the *Hockey!/Soccer!* dual-cart for its Odyssey system (or Videopac in Europe).

1980: PELE'S SOCCER

■ The first major footballing star to get his own game courtesy of this Atari 2600 licence.

1981: NASL SOCCER

■ This Intellivision game contained the first licence from a governing body.





FIVE ESSENTIAL GAMES

Here are some of our favourite soccerball games…



MATCH DAY

■ 1984

■ ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD

Until 1984, football on the ZX Spectrum had been dominated by Kevin Toms' *Football Manager*, with only Artic's *World Cup Football* providing any decent thrills. *Match Day* changed all that with bigger sprites, a cup competition and superb presentation. It would go on to become one of Ocean's biggest selling titles.



KICK OFF

■ 1989 ■ ATARI ST

Originating on the 16-bits, a key difference with Dino Dini's award-winning *Kick Off* was the way the player controlled the ball. Now you needed to press fire at the right moment to control the ball and then it realistically bobbled in front of the player. The introduction of fouls, tactics and player characteristics also set *Kick Off* apart and the series has a cult following even today.



SENSIBLE SOCCER

■ 1992

■ COMMODORE AMIGA

Like *Kick Off*, Sensible Software's self-titled soccer game still has many fans today. Yet despite vague similarities in presentation, *Sensible Soccer* had a considerably more zoomed-out view in order to present more of the field to the player, although it was for the after touch feature, allowing swerving shots, that the series became most renowned.



FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

■ 1993

■ MEGA DRIVE, SNES

Despite question marks over its gameplay, the original *FIFA* proved to be an enormous hit and cemented its position as the most well-known football game franchise for years to come. Taking an innovative isometric view, the order of the day was spectacular goals and fast gameplay.



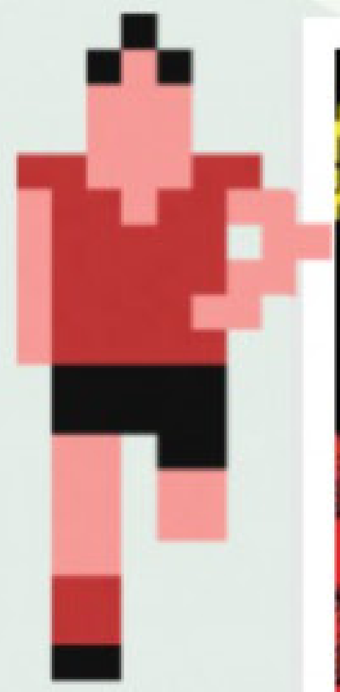
ISS PRO EVOLUTION 2

■ 2001 ■ PLAYSTATION

Bringing in unprecedented levels of realism, *ISS Pro Evolution 2* became the benchmark as both Konami (with its subsequent *Pro Evolution Soccer* series) and EA struggled to adapt to the new consoles. Combining complexity with intuitive gameplay, to many it remains the best footie game of the last 15 years, if not all time.

unfairly compared), offered absolutely no strategic options but had no pretensions of doing so anyway, and, despite sinking without trace on the C64 thanks to *International Soccer*, could have dominated the Spectrum football game scene but for one man and one game.

"I was at a computing show having just done *Bear Bovver* for Artic and was asking distributors what they were looking for," says Jon Ritman, author of the legendary *Match Day* series. "And they were almost unanimous – they wanted a game like *International Soccer*, except on the Spectrum." As a freelancer, Jon had the luxury of choosing his work, and despite a general disinterest in the sport, made a football game his next project. "I never actually played *International Soccer* until after I'd completed *Match Day*, so that wasn't much of an influence other than with the perspective," explains Jon, "but I'd played Artic's *World Cup Football* and disliked the lack of solidity in the players – you could run through them and take the ball off them which seemed really dumb." *Match Day* would be a revelation graphically as Jon employed larger, solid sprites (unsubtly lifted from his previous game, *Bear Bovver*), enabling the player to utilise the characters' ▶





» [ZX Spectrum] *Street Gang Football* combined the football and beat-'em-up genres.

1982

THE BIG GAME ■ One of the finest LCD tabletop games, *The Big Game*, is released by Grandstand.

1983

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER ■ Not the first football game to feature a horizontally-scrolling pitch, but certainly the best of the Commodore 64's early life.

1984

MATCH DAY ■ Jon Ritman's classic boasted unparalleled presentation, solid players and a precise passing scheme, all hitherto unknown on the ZX Spectrum.

1985

TEHKAN WORLD CUP ■ It may not have been the first top-down football game, but it's one of the most fondly-remembered thanks to fast, controllable action.

1986

1987

MICROPROSE SOCCER ■ Featuring indoor and outdoor versions and the the 'banana shot'. It also utilises weather effects with rain assisting sliding tackles.

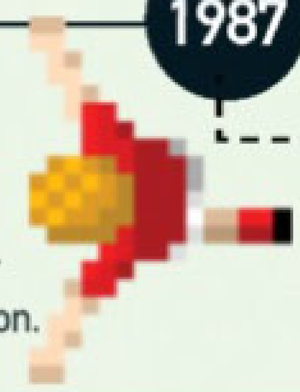
FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR ■ Gremlin Graphics releases this game where you control just one player, a star striker, diluting the action right down to the shooting and scoring aspect of football.

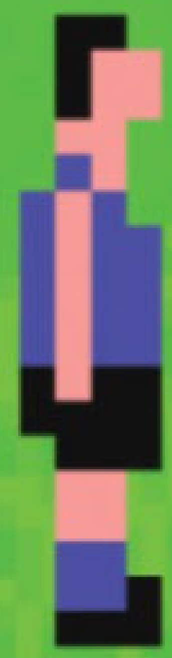
1988

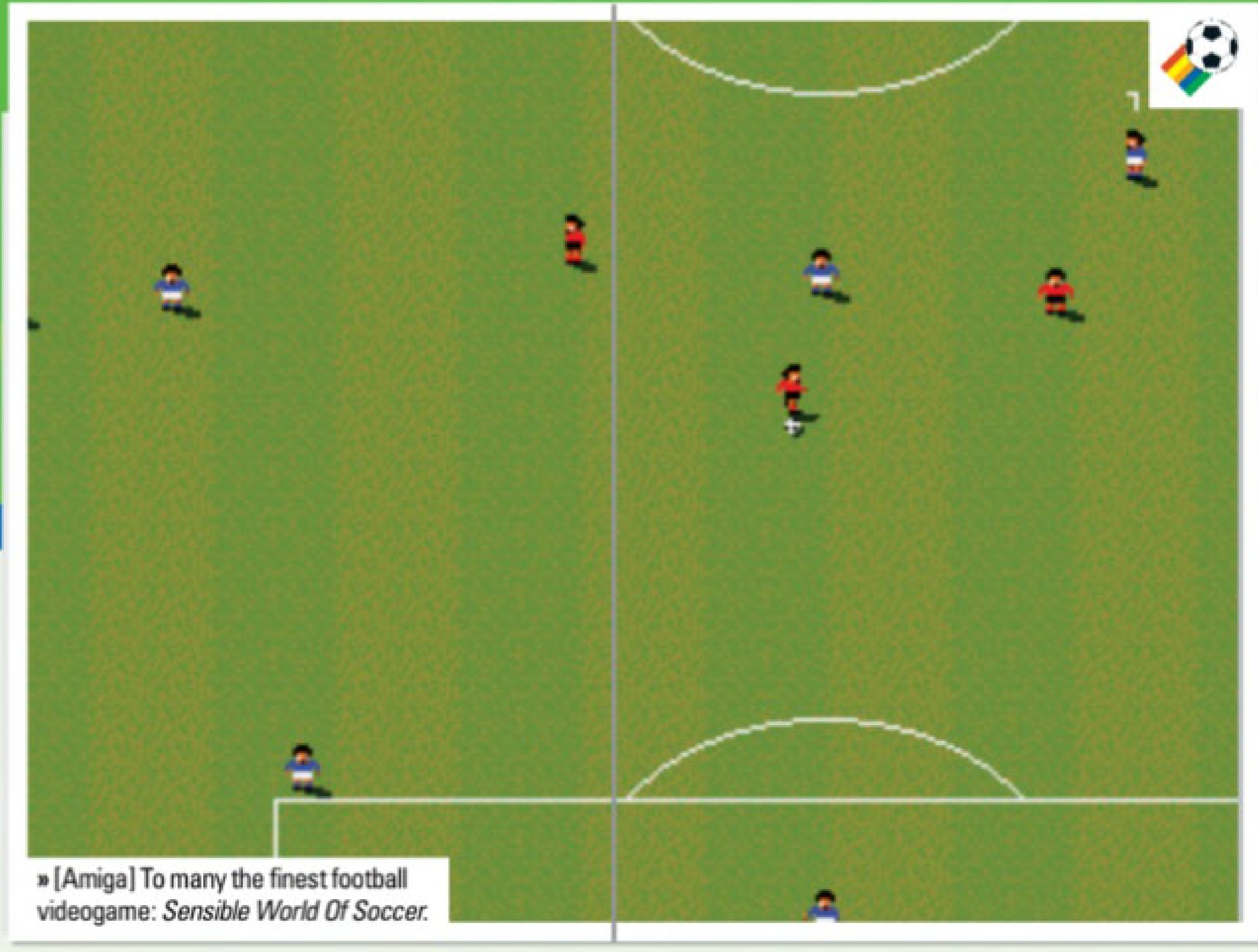
1989

STREET GANG FOOTBALL ■ A game so bad the players will often start arguing over a goal and eventually stop playing and go home.

1990

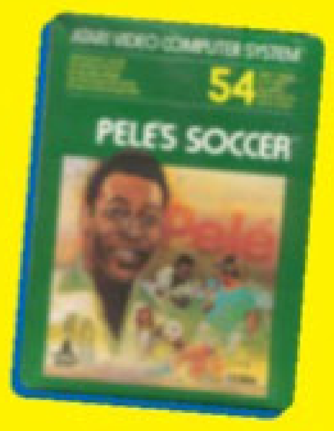





» [Amiga] To many the finest football videogame: *Sensible World Of Soccer.*

SUPER STARS

Memorable players who lent their names and faces to football videogames



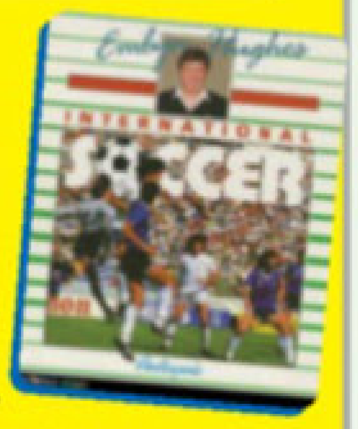
PELE'S SOCCER 1980

■ Arguably the most famous player ever, Pele lent his name to the Atari 2600's four-man team football game. Despite its simple nature, *Pele's Soccer* was a huge step up from the simple bat and ball games of the previous decade.



PETER SHILTON'S HANDBALL MARADONA! 1986

■ Certainly one of the strangest titles for a game, and one that blended two famous footballing legends. As a goalkeeping sim it was never likely to be a huge seller, but proved an interesting variation. And you could use your hands – legally.



EMLYN HUGHES INTERNATIONAL SOCCER 1988

■ As the name would suggest, Audiogenic's simulation was based in spirit on the Commodore 64 hit *International Soccer* with a similar viewpoint, improved gameplay and the squeaky-voiced *Question Of Sport* captain's name on it.



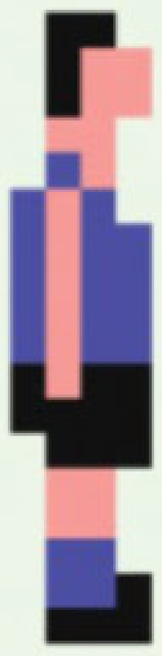
CHRIS KAMARA'S STREET SOCCER 2000

■ Incredibly the world had to wait until the year 2000 for what surely represents the biggest coup in licensing history from budget label Midas. UNBELIEVABLE JEFF!



DAVID BECKHAM SOCCER 2000

■ Another football game from Liverpool's Rage Software, and one that utilised an endorsement from possibly the game's most famous star. Similar to *UEFA Striker*, it's highlight was unsurprisingly its free kick mode.



▶ entire body, including the head, to control or pass the ball. The result, thanks to a cup competition, relatively fast gameplay and finely tuned AI was an outstanding hit for Ocean Software which had approached Jon in 1983 and impressed him with its professionalism and advertising prowess. *Match Day 2* would follow in 1987 and offered even more options such as a league competition, volleys, three strength of passes, back heels and a unique diamond deflection system that could be used to perform flick-ons or one-touch passes.

Meanwhile, in the arcades, football games, while proving a challenge to manipulate into the coin-munching demographic required, had had a few notable releases. *Exciting Soccer* (1983) from Alpha Denshi was the first major game to feature a penalty shoot-out while *Tehkan World Cup* boasted a unique control and pass system thanks to its innovative trackball controller. In addition to a pass button, the trackball could be used to not only control direction but also the pace of the pass, allowing for a much more frantic and action-orientated experience. Graphics were of course also vastly superior to the home computers of the time where compilations such as Codemasters' *Four Soccer Simulator* tried to recompense by including several flavours of football such as indoor, skills and street. Other notable home efforts of the time included *Emlyn Hughes International Soccer* from Audiogenic which, like *Match Day*, took the template laid down by Commodore's *International Soccer* and enhanced it, most notably with hugely improved control over the each player; and *Footballer Of The Year*, Gremlin Graphics' interesting take on the genre with the player-dictating career of just one player, an aspirational fourth division striker. At the other end of the field, the odd *Peter Shilton's Handball Maradona!* had a dig at the Argentinian's gamesmanship while essentially being a goalie simulation.

As with most genre of games, with the new powerful 16-bit machines, more possibilities in terms of gameplay could become reality. First onto the pitch in 1989 was Dino Dini's *Kick Off* which graphically offered little in addition to what had preceded it: a vertically (or horizontally on some versions) scrolling pitch occupied by small, if graphically more distinct men. Dino explains his use of the familiar view. "I don't think side-on views work well because of the perspective. I like overhead views, whether horizontal or vertical, as it makes it easier for players to understand the geometry

> "I don't think side-on views work well because of the perspective. I like overhead views"
> Dino Dini

VIRTUA STRIKER

■ Using the same tech as *Virtua Fighter*, Sega revolutionised football games in the arcades with the first game to boast a 3D stadium and players.



FIFA SOCCER 96

■ The first game to feature an official licence that included the rights to use real player names. Now you could play with luminaries such as Warren Barton and Graeme Le Saux...

1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998



FEVER PITCH

■ Copying *FIFA International Soccer*'s isometric style, *Fever Pitch* was the first 16-bit game to put the focus on diving, fouling and generally cheating.



ACTUA SOCCER

■ The first football game to use motion capture techniques and the first home console game to feature 3D player models.

of the field." So graphically and in terms of perspective *Kick Off* was not particularly revolutionary – what set it apart from the full-capacity crowd? "The most important identifying feature of football is the name," smiles Dino, "foot-ball. Not being able to carry the ball is a key part of that! And if you have the ball stuck to the player, then it might as well be carry-ball. Or rugby." Dino's method of ball control may not have pleased many action-junkies, but the realistic nature appealed to just as many if not more. Stop – control – dribble – pass. Playing *Kick Off* any other way was virtually impossible and certainly a sure way to a heavy defeat. The game was a major success on the Commodore Amiga and Atari ST, although the 8-bit conversions left a little to be desired.

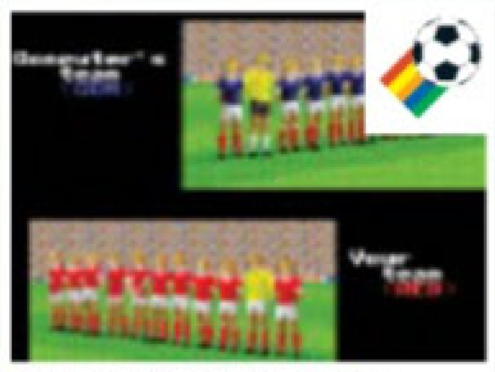
Also released in 1989 was *Microprose Soccer*, another overhead vertically-scrolling game, but one which played very differently to *Kick Off*. In contrast to Dino Dini's effort, the ball stuck to players' feet and the focus was more on fast-paced action and crazy goals – lots of crazy goals thanks to a very entertaining and effective banana shot. *Microprose Soccer* proved to be an innovative game in many respects; not only did it boast the aforementioned curling shots, weather and an indoor six-a-side competition, it was also created by Sensible Software aka Chris Yates and Jon Hare, who would have an even bigger hit on their hands very soon. *Sensible Soccer* (1992) was another vertically-scrolling game, and one which hit the sweet spot for many gamers, especially on the Commodore Amiga. "I think playing from top to bottom best represents how a footballer thinks on the pitch," says Jon, "forward and backwards and allowing you to aim shots at goal more accurately. Side to side is the view of a TV spectator or manager – not the player." *Sensible Soccer* was a huge hit. Jon and Chris's attention to detail, in addition to the monumental playability, speed and sheer enjoyment were the main contributors. "We put a hell of a lot of work into *Sensible Soccer* – and *Sensible World Of Soccer* – not only to make it playable, but also to recreate the entire world of football," explains Jon. This world included management options (that had rarely been seen before in football action games), realistic shirt numbering and the inclusion of black and blonde players. "We put our heart and soul into the game. I think the only thing we left out was the man with the magic sponge," laughs Jon. "He was on the subs bench, but never made it onto the pitch."

Unbeknownst to most gamers, especially those enjoying the delights of *Sensible Soccer*, *Kick Off 2* and *Goal!*





» [Arcade] *Tecmo World Cup '94* neatly zoomed in when the action got interesting.


» [Arcade] The teams lines up in *Tehkan World Cup*.


» [Mega Drive] I never touched him ref!

DID YOU KNOW

1 Early versions of football videogames were based on the common *Pong* engine, doubling the bats and decreasing the area behind them to form a 'goal'.

2 The Magnavox Odyssey received a similar version that replaced an American Football game in Europe. The 1976 version Odyssey 500 came with an updated version built-in.

3 *Pele's Soccer* was the biggest early licence and a big seller for Atari, although the game itself was distinctly second division. Hmm, maybe there's a point there…

4 The Atari VCS cart, *RealSports Soccer*, and Mattel's *NASL Soccer* were the earliest examples of horizontally-scrolling football games on home consoles although Mattel's game has the edge, mainly because it includes goalkeepers!

5 Andrew Spencer's *International Soccer* is the big early football hit on the Commodore 64 while Jon Ritman creates a rival in *Match Day* for the ZX Spectrum. Both games were impressive sellers.

6 *Kick Off* introduced fouls, penalties and many other features never before seen together on home computers. Love it or hate it (there appears to be no midfield on the matter) it was trailblazing in many respects.

7 *Microprose Soccer* was an action-packed precursor to *Sensible Soccer* which itself had a zoomed-out view allowing the player to see much more of the field. Outrageous goals were also an intrinsic part of the gameplay.

8 The original *FIFA International Soccer* used an attractive and innovative isometric view and focused entirely on spectacular goals and quick moves up and down the field.



FIFA 97

■ While its cartridge-based peers retained the previously used isometric display, this PC version of the series was the first to use the 3D stadium in combination with 3D sprites.

FIFA STREET

■ Although street soccer has long been a subgenre, EA popularised it in 2005 with this macro-style four-versus-four game.

1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006

ISS PRO EVOLUTION 2

■ Released exclusively on the PlayStation, thanks to its smooth and refined gameplay, enhanced formation options and beautiful graphics, *ISS Pro Evo 2* remains one of the finest football games, and the most highly-rated in magazines at the time.





» [Mega Drive] *World Cup Italia* featured semi-animated cutscenes but wasn't a great game.

▶ (the latter two games from Dino Dini), a giant was busily being created that would shatter the world of football games. Under the development name of *EA Soccer*, a troubled gestation threatened to halt what would become the most heavily-hyped football game ever. Competing in a field occupied by the games mentioned above meant Electronic Arts needed to produce something exceptional to stand out on the terraces. Championed almost exclusively by the European division of the company, a revolutionary isometric viewpoint was proposed and designed by the UK team; this and the desire to make the game as realistic graphically as possible and a high-quality presentation (including a multitude of colourful menus, manic goal celebrations, realistic crowd noise, chanting and action replays) would be the hooks that set *EA Soccer* apart from its peers. Oh and of course, the acquisition of an official FIFA licence. That probably helped too, although initially the deal did not include players' names, likenesses or team badges. It would be another two years and *FIFA Soccer 96* before gamers would get the chance to play as their own heroes. But despite this oversight, *FIFA International Soccer* was an incredible success when it was released at Christmas 1993, kick-starting an inevitable trend of yearly updates. And suddenly, in one swoop, top-down arcade football games such as *Kick Off*, *Sensible Soccer* and Sega's *Ultimate Soccer*, were starting to look primitive in comparison – even if they arguably offered much more in terms of gameplay.



» [Mega Drive] *Kick Off 3* featured no direct input from Dino Dini and suffered because of it.



» [SNES] A footballer – or is it Sumo wrestler? – celebrates a goal in the amusing *Fever Pitch*.

In 1995, Sony released the PlayStation, the first CD-based games console to break into the mainstream. The added capacity of compact discs itself opened up a realm of new possibilities: full 3D graphics, larger sprites and hugely improved audio, including a proper commentary. This change, while inevitable, signalled the death to many of the true 'fun' football game as the genre entered a period of realism-chasing that it has not left since. While the arcades and Sega led the way with *Virtua Striker*'s state-of-the-art texture mapping and impressive 3D graphics, first to embrace the new home CD-based formats was Gremlin Interactive. With the sly-dig tagline "There's nothing virtual about *Actua*", *Actua Soccer* was the first console football game to utilise true 3D models for players based on the motion capture of real footballers. In addition, the BBC's Barry Davies provided in-game commentary, and along with action-replays and a television-style presentation, it was obvious football videogames were beginning to mimic the armchair experience. And someone at Electronic Arts took notice too.

The updated versions of *FIFA*, *FIFA 95* and *FIFA 96*, had done little to improve upon the formula despite the addition of real player names in *96* and a 'virtual stadium' concept that was unfortunately betrayed by the continued use of flat 2D sprites. Electronic Arts had little choice but to release yet another similar game graphically on the Sega Mega Drive and Super Nintendo where cartridge ▶

"While FIFA and Pro Evolution Soccer continue to strive towards realism, many just want to have a fun and entertaining game"

Simon Read



FIFA 2009

■ Sales of the latest version are bolstered with the introduction of Ultimate Team, a mode that allows players to create their own teams.

2007 — 2008 — 2010 — 2011 — 2012 — 2013





FIFA 14

■ The Xbox One and PlayStation 4 versions of the latest *FIFA* included a new engine (Ignite) and even more realistic nostril hair animation.



WHAT MAKES A GREAT FOOTBALL GAME?

The cool little after touches that make a good football game amazing

PRESENTATION
■ Plentiful and colourful menus, formation displays, commentary, crowd noise, team selection, country flags – *FIFA*, for all its faults, became a standout in these respects.

AMAZING GOALS
■ A breathtaking counter attack, a stunning free kick, an immaculately timed volley, or even a dink over the keeper after a mazy run. And don't forget the bicycle kick!

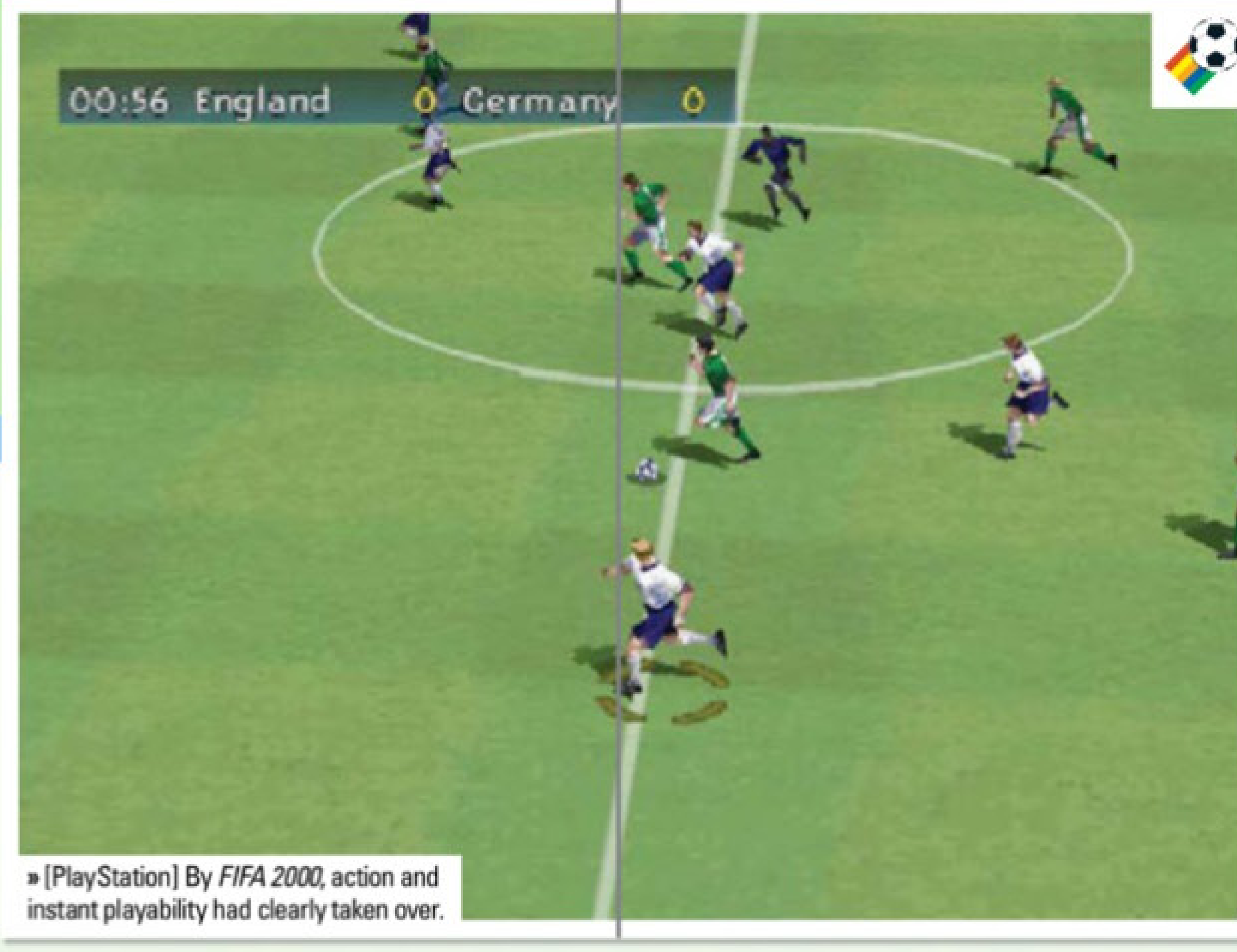
SUPER SKILLS
■ More prevalent in modern football games where more control options exist, skills such as the step-over, back-heel or feint all add to the excitement.

CELEBRATIONS
■ From *Tecmo World Cup*'s 'flying players' to the modern day unlockable tomfoolery, how you celebrate a goal is all part of the entertainment.

SPEED
■ Excitement and playability comes from fast, flowing and precise movement and passing and, of course, blisteringly quick shots on goal.

space negated whistles and bells such as commentaries and 3D motion-captured player models. Over on the PlayStation and PC, however (and to a lesser extent the Sega Saturn) it was a different story as proper 3D sprites similar to *Actua Soccer*'s graced both these versions, with motion capturing courtesy of skittish French winger David Ginola. *FIFA 97* would prove to be a turning point in terms of appearance and presentation for the series as the dulcet tones of John Motson, Des Lynam and Andy Gray accompanied the new 3D player models. Whether these aspects improved the gameplay was highly debatable; despite generally effusive reviews, *FIFA 97*'s engine was too ambitious for the technology of the time and it often felt you were controlling a clumsy and slow Vauxhall Conference veteran rather than a sleek skilful Premier League primadonna. Despite these flaws, the *FIFA* series continued to grow and an imminent World Cup year promised another potential money-spinning licensing opportunity. Meantime Gremlin Interactive cemented the popularity of the best-selling *Actua Soccer* with a club edition and a sequel proper in 1996 that contained some of the most impressively animated goal nets, if nothing else. In the arcades, Tecmo was busy with its own World Cup games with *Tecmo World Cup '94* in particular proving popular thanks to its 'zoom-in' feature whenever the action became frantic. Meantime, back on the home systems, a series that would prove to one day be a great rival to *FIFA* was being conceived in Japan.


» [PlayStation 2] The PS2 and Xbox era ushered in an unprecedented level of realism.



» [PlayStation] By *FIFA 2000*, action and instant playability had clearly taken over.

"Everybody remembers International Soccer. It was in every Dixons and WHSmith window!"

Jon Ritman

Konami had already cut its teeth with *Hyper Soccer* on the NES and *International Superstar Soccer* on the SNES, Mega Drive and PlayStation, with a follow up in 1997 for the Nintendo 64. A separate team worked on *Goal Storm* – known as *Winning Eleven* in Japan – and this was released for the PlayStation only in 1996, again featuring the now-fashionable motion captured players. The series morphed from here to *Goal Storm 97*, aka *International Superstar Soccer Pro* to *ISS Pro Evolution 2* in 1999 while retaining the *Winning Eleven* theme in Japan. Many would regard *ISS Pro Evo 2* as the pinnacle of the series before it had even adopted the name we know and love today, *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Mixing real players' names (for the first time in this series) with an ability to fine tune skills and micro-manage tactics, *ISS Pro Evo 2* had a fluidity of movement and passing that was sorely missed from the *FIFA* games of the time.

With the next generation of machines came more processing power but increased pressure to push the realism even further. The vinitial versions of both *Pro Evolution Soccer* (into which *ISS Pro Evo* had changed) and *FIFA* failed to make the most of the hardware, although they were admittedly smoother graphically compared to the mass of polygons on the PlayStation. Then, for *Pro Evolution Soccer*'s sequel in 2002, the balance shifted firmly into Konami's half. The sublime gameplay was back, the player in control of every facet of their team's movement and passing. In comparison *FIFA* looked good but struggled to match *PES* for playability. Konami and *Pro Evolution Soccer* looked set to be champions for some time.

But slowly Electronic Arts and its official licence has clawed its way back into contention. Maybe it was complacency on Konami's part, or an obvious shift with *PES 4* towards arcade action and goals galore that alienated some fans. Despite the strongest entry in the series to date with *Pro Evolution Soccer 6*, Konami's great franchise has fared less well on the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 machines. With its graphics not particularly improved over *PES 6* and a multitude of bugs and glitches, *PES 2008* saw the balance move firmly over to FIFA where it remains today.

Today, while 3D graphics and ultra-realism may have disenfranchised many fans, football games are still popular. As we write, *FIFA 15* is being worked on, as are a multitude of smaller games on mobile platforms. The success of titles such as *New Star Soccer* has proved that simple playability can still trump realism and being able to count blades of grass. Football games may have come a long way since the bat-and-ball *Pong* clones of 40 years ago and the power is with gamers to influence the next direction; the market appears begging for a return to the glorious playable nature of games such as *Sensible Soccer* and *ISS Pro Evolution*. As legendary player and ex-England manager Kevin Keegan once wisely said: "The tide is very much in our court now".*


» [PlayStation] World Cups gave Electronic Arts the opportunity for another neat tie-in.


» [PlayStation] *Actua Soccer 3* refined the Actua engine even further.



» [PC] The Germans mount an early attack in *FIFA 97*.

Special thanks to Dino Dini, Jon Hare, Jon Ritman, Jim Bagley, Tony Casson, Simon Read, Simon Burton and Matt Brown of Retro Carnival.

DEVELOPER ROUND TABLE

We spoke to some of football's greatest gaming minds to get better insight into the beautiful game



JIM BAGLEY
DEVELOPER, STRIKER



DINO DINI
CREATOR, KICK OFF

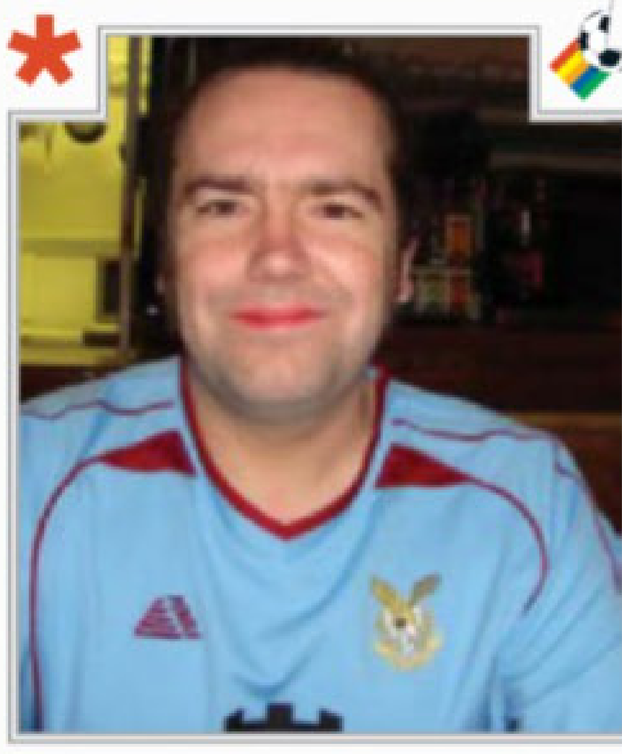
Despite it being over 40 years since the first football game was released, opinion still varies on what aspects you need to focus on to make a great football game. We gathered the finest minds behind some of the best iterations of the beautiful game to try and settle it once and for all. But first we asked them what was the first football videogame they recalled playing…

"That's easy," smiles Jim Bagley, author of Rage's *Striker* on the Sega Mega Drive. "It was on the Binatone TV Master Mark 6. I used to play it against my brother and despite its simplicity we had great laughs playing it!" The man behind *New Star Soccer*, the runaway PC and iOS success, Simon Read remembers: "It was either *Football Manager* on the Spectrum or *Pele's Soccer* on the Atari 2600. One was a masterpiece, the other, less so." Jon Ritman, of *Match Day* fame, readily admits he's not a big fan of football so hardly played any football game prior to *Match Day* although he points out: "Everybody remembers *International Soccer* on the Commodore 64. It was in every Dixons and WHSmith shop window!" Tony Casson, who acted as producer for the entire *Actua Soccer* series also recalls the Commodore 64 classic *International Soccer* as an early experience, while Jon Hare has fond memories of *Tekhan World Cup* from the arcade and *Match Day* on the ZX Spectrum.

So these are the earliest; what about the favourites? "The early versions of *Pro Evolution Soccer*," continues Jon, "because they played really well and dethroned *FIFA*!" Tony lists a range of titles from *Microprose Soccer* to *International Superstar Soccer* on the SNES, while Jim's all-time best is *Sensible Soccer*, "for its speed of play and after-touch ball control."

In some ways their favourites define them – but what are the key elements for a good football game? "You need to put skill first," says Dino Dini, "and make the game simple, fun and deep. All really successful games in general manage to have all three of these things." *Sensible Soccer*'s Jon Hare says, "Playability is most important as is the right level of challenge, authenticity to the sport and lots of game progress."

Again, it appears key that a combination of several factors is needed to hit the sweet spot. Tony Casson has a different, unsurprising view, considering his involvement with the *Actua* series. "Instant playability is paramount for me as I simply do not have the patience for 'getting' a control method. If I can't do the majority of what I want to do in the first five minutes then I will put the controller down." With his opinion at slight odds with the others, we ask Tony if this means he prefers a lack of depth. "No, it doesn't mean there isn't room for that, I don't want everything to be press and hope. But I want the basics in minutes and I want precision and delicateness to be intuitive to my fingers too." Jon Ritman, who coded three versions of his *Match Day* series says, "I know a lot of fans revel in having authentic player and team names, but for me it was always about the playability and being able to pass into space rather than having a 'pass' button which always found a player. When I coded the original *Match Day* I had to make it all work on one button; nowadays it's the reverse and there are too many buttons!"



JON HARE
DEVELOPER, SWOS

On the subject of modern football games, Jim Bagley notes, "I've found the whole tempo is slowed down these days. I'd like to see the old fast form of football games come back like *Sensi* and *Kick Off*. But the new ones are still selling so I guess that's what people prefer these days." Simon Read agrees with Jim. "While *FIFA* and *PES* continue to strive towards realism, many just want to have a fun and entertaining game without an encyclopedic knowledge of the controls and features. Mobile games by their very nature are like this as players want to be able to dip in and out of a game."

So in-depth play with a myriad of controls or a simple intuitive game? Our developers lean more towards the latter, but not without discrepancies. And the success of *FIFA* indicates EA is doing something right. As Jon Hare concludes: "Right now the markets are polarised with free-to-play and triple-A titles dominating and not allowing space for anything else. But the next football game will be mid-production level… eventually."



TONY CASSON
PRODUCER, ACTUA SOCCER



SIMON READ
CREATOR, NEW STAR SOCCER



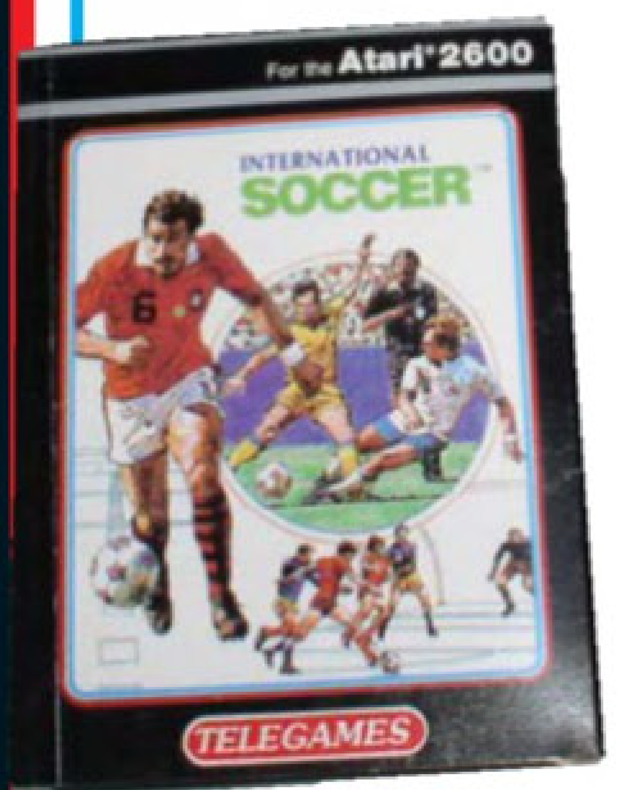
» [Amiga] The *Sensible Soccer* games are still fantastic fun to play.

TELEGAMES

OCEANS APART

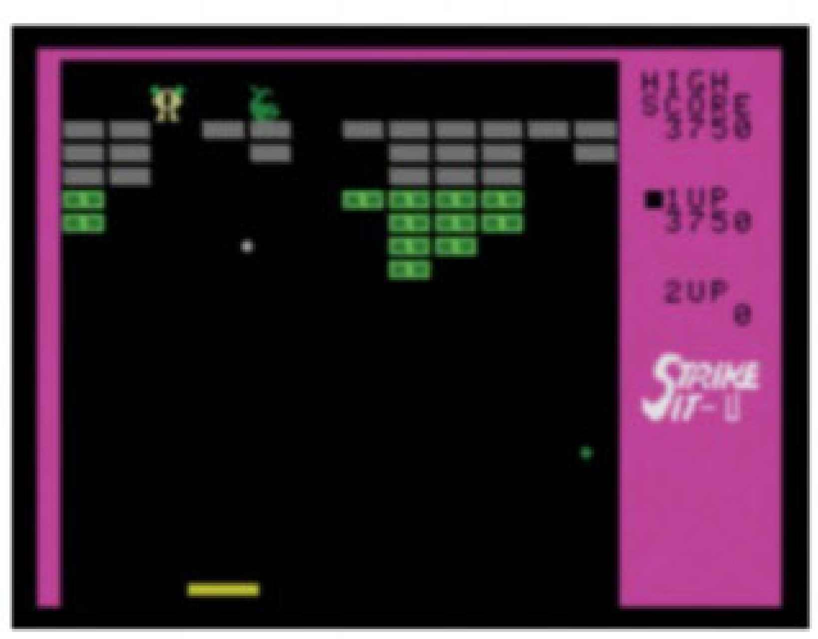
A TELEGAMES RETROSPECTIVE

The Telegames story is one of two countries separated by an ocean. For some 35 years it has been supplying videogames for our enjoyment, and so Kieren Hawken does some pond hopping to detail the company's legacy





Pete Mortimer set up the first incarnation of Telegames in 1979 as a small retailer based in a petrol forecourt shop in Leicester. This might not sound like the birthplace of a prolific videogame publisher but everyone has to start somewhere right? "The Intellivision had recently been released and Telegames was one of the few places in the midlands where games for the system could be bought," recalls Pete when we ask him to reminisce on Telegames's humble beginnings. "We had resisted stocking the Atari 2600 as everybody was selling that system, and we wanted to be different." Being different proved to be a good move for the fledgling company and good sales of the system and games soon allowed Telegames to move to bigger premises. Then, in 1981, it started selling games, consoles and accessories by mail order, something it soon became famous for. Before long Telegames had become one of the largest independent videogame suppliers in the UK, an expansion Pete was clearly pleased about. "I kept adding all the popular game systems to the ever-growing list of products we were selling," he proudly tells us. "I avoided computer-based products though as, like the 2600, everyone was doing these. I stayed with pure gaming systems." This was another brave move, considering that the 8-bit computers had really taken hold of the UK videogame market, but it was another one that very much worked in Telegames's favour. It was now the biggest stockist of consoles and console games in the country and adverts were soon appearing in the back of every popular multi-format gaming magazine.

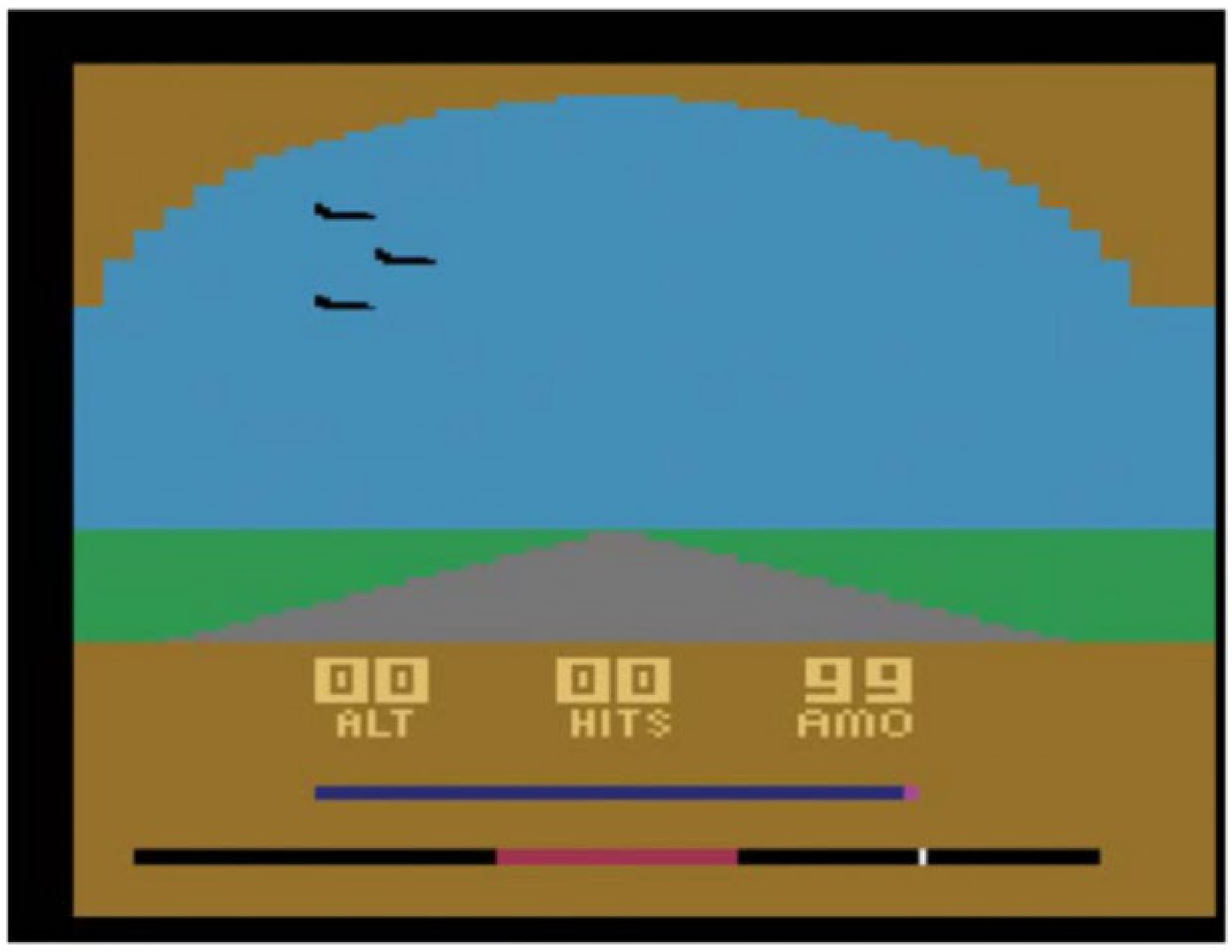


In 1983 one of the most notorious and talked about events in videogame history occurred, the North American videogame crash. The crash saw companies like Atari lose millions of dollars overnight and saw several big players just pull out of the market all together. Many people think that this had no effect on the growing European market, but that is not strictly the case. One of the biggest casualties of this market shift was Coleco when, in 1985, it dropped its ColecoVision console after just over two years on the market. This of course had a huge impact on the UK distributor of the ColecoVision, CBS Electronics. Pete recalls these events.

"In 1983 when the ColecoVision system was released in the UK we were the largest independent dealer for that system. In 1985 when CBS finished supporting the system Telegames bought substantial stocks from the UK importer, together with some assembly and manufacture rights to the machine. Soon after that we launched the Telegames Personal Arcade, however with the high price of components it was only available for a short time as the retail price could not support the manufacture cost." The Telegames Personal Arcade was actually based on a Taiwanese clone of the ColecoVision called the Dina 2-in-1. This console was named as such because it could play both ColecoVision and Sega SG-1000 games using two separate cartridge ports, the actual hardware of the two systems was very similar indeed as they were both based on the MSX standard. The original Dina 2-in-1 was actually produced by Bit Corporation which produced a number of games for the Atari 2600 and ColecoVision, as well as later failing to penetrate the handheld market with the Gamate. Part of this deal also saw Telegames re-publish Bit Corporation's ColecoVision titles under its own branding. This would be Telegames's first venture into the hardware market, but not its last, and saw Pete start to explore some new avenues.

In 1986 the company that became known as Telegames USA was started in small town near Dallas, Texas. The North American branch started developing and publishing videogames, as well as distributing them, interestingly, for the Atari 2600. The origins of this part of the company go back to 1982 when Terry L Grantham, the ex-boss of Apollo joined up with George Kokoruda, Ed Salvo and Mike Smith (also ex-Apollo employees) to set up Sunrise Games and its distribution arm VSS Inc (Video Software Specialists). Apollo Games had been the second third-party company to start producing games for the Atari 2600 after Activision. Sadly its quality was nowhere near as good and this gave the company the infamous accolade of also being the first to go out of business.

The new company Sunrise Games went on to both develop and publish a number of games for the ColecoVision, Atari 8-bit range, Commodore 64 and Atari 2600. It also coded games for people such a Xonox, Wizard Games and CBS Electronics. It was these ColecoVision connections that led Sunrise Games to join up with Telegames and become the US branch of the company. It ▶

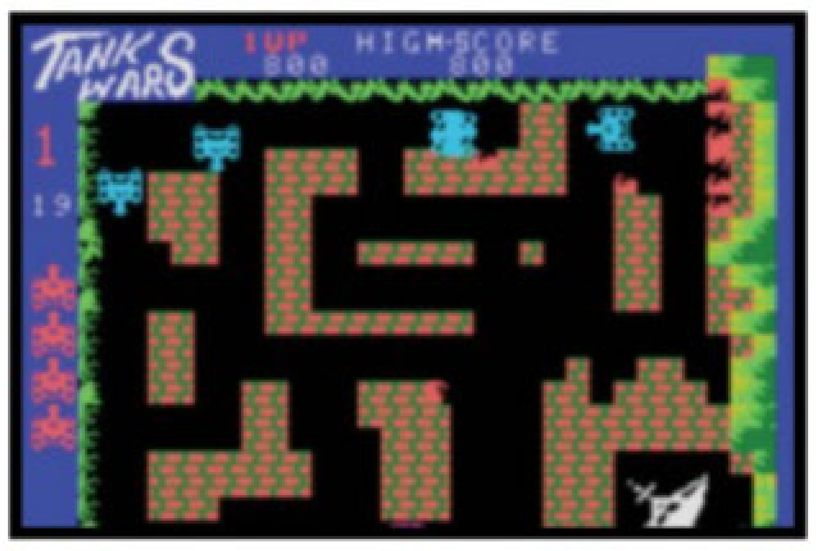


» [Atari 2600] *Bogey Blaster* is a game that's snot to be sniffed at!

IN THE KNOW

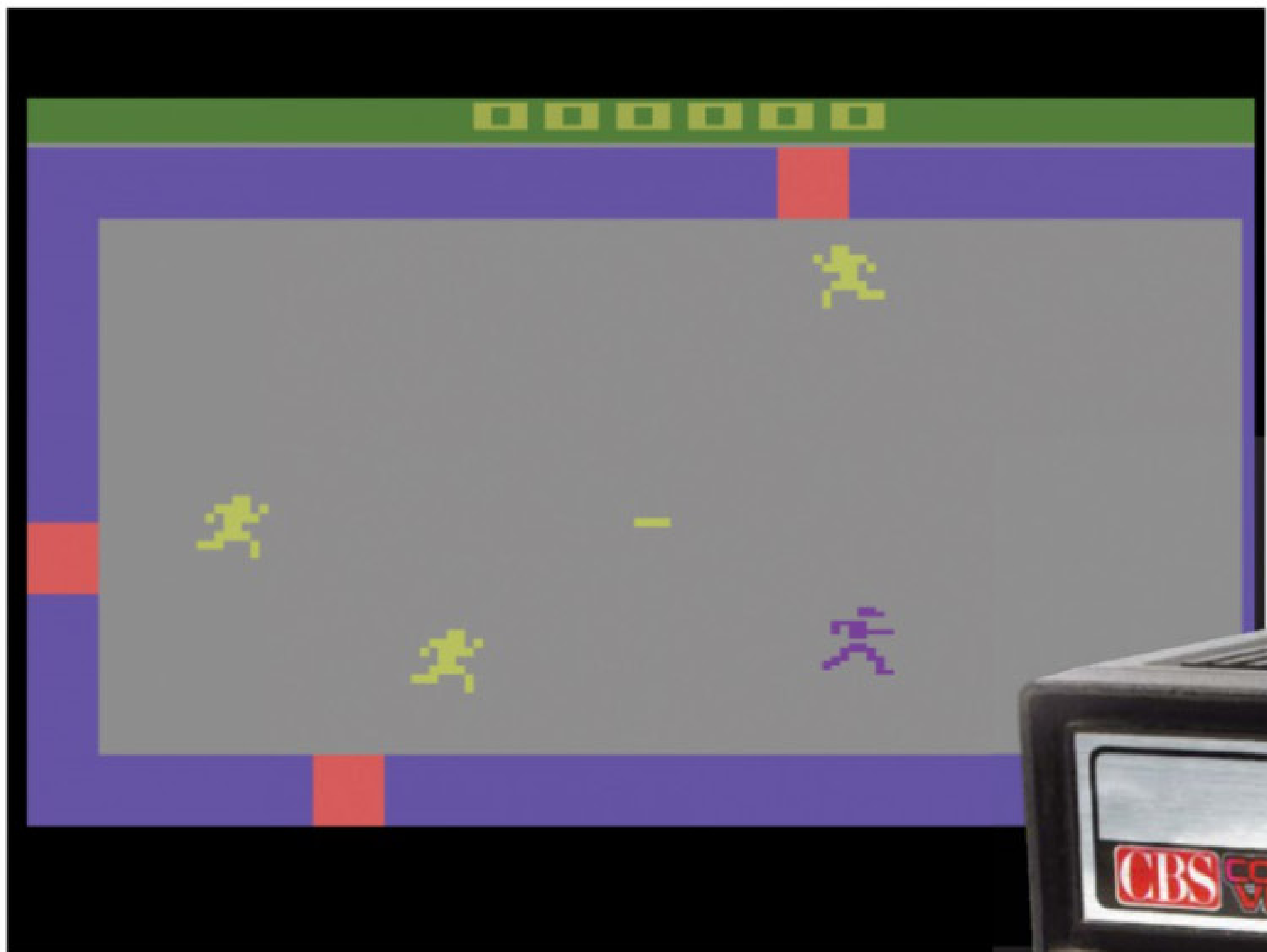
- Telegames has been supplying videogames for over 35 years!
- There are both UK and US branches of the company.
- It still supports both retro and modern systems to this very day.
- Over the years it has published games for 12 different formats.
- It was the first third-party publisher for both the Atari Lynx and Jaguar.

» [ColecoVision] Licensed from Bit Corp, *Tank Wars* is an excellent clone of Namco's *Battle City* arcade game.



"We had resisted stocking the Atari 2600, as everybody was selling that system, and we wanted to be different"
PETE MORTIMER

» [Atari 2600] Telegames re-released many of Mattel's M-Network titles including the excellent *Tron: Deadly Discs*.





» [ColecoVision] *Skiing* was the last commercial game to be released for the ColecoVision.



TIMELINE

1979 TELEGAMES IS FOUNDED ON A PETROL STATION FORECOURT

1981 THE COMPANY STARTS SUPPLYING BOTH GAMES AND HARDWARE VIA MAIL ORDER

1985 TELEGAMES ACQUIRES THE RIGHTS TO THE COLECOVISION RANGE

1986 THE AMERICAN BRANCH OF THE COMPANY IS FORMED NEAR DALLAS, TEXAS

1990 TELEGAMES BECOMES THE FIRST THIRD-PARTY PUBLISHER FOR THE ATARI LYNX

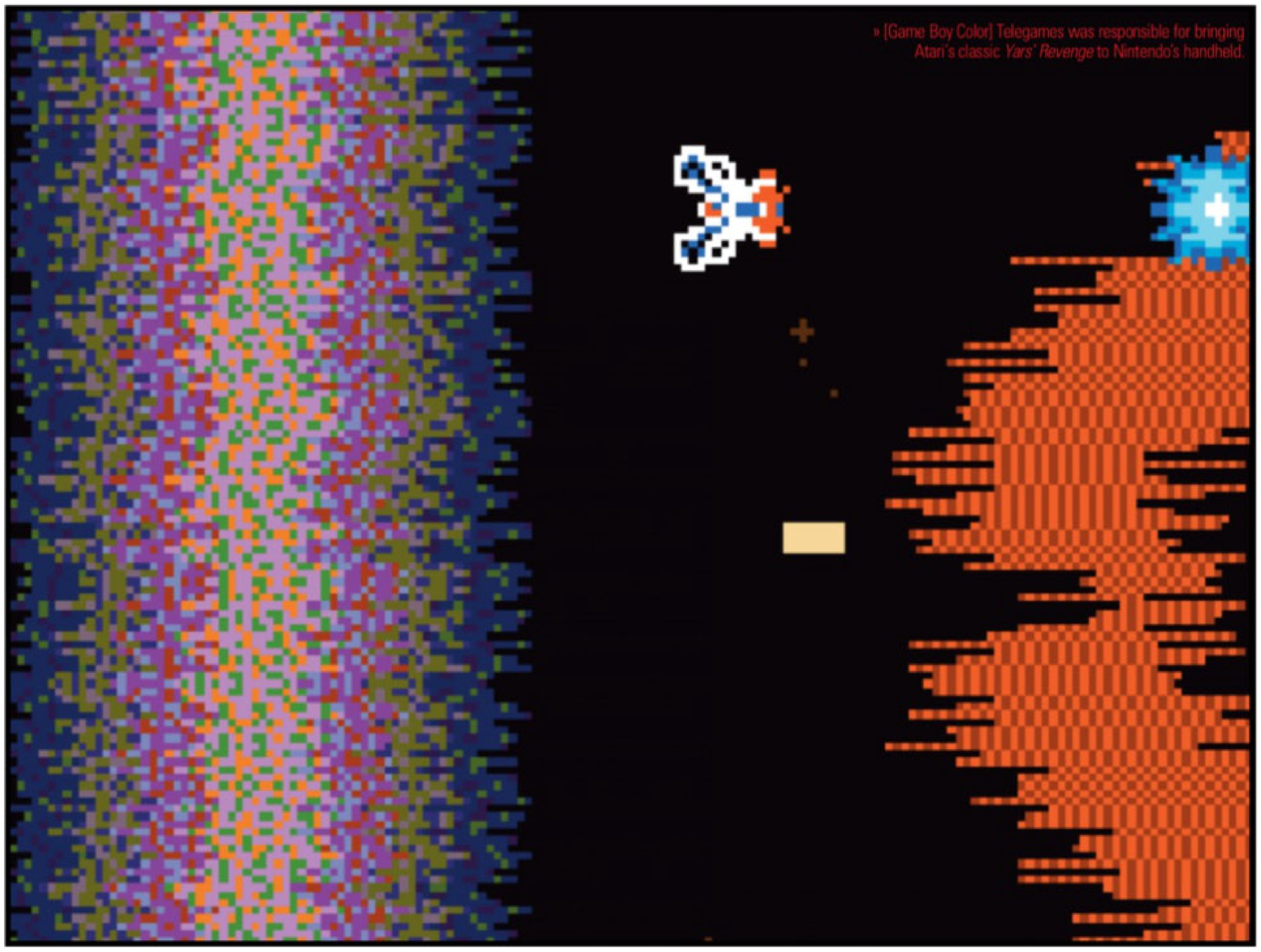
1993 IT ALSO RELEASES THE FIRST THIRD-PARTY ATARI JAGUAR GAME

1996 AFTER ATARI'S REVERSE MERGER WITH JTS, TELEGAMES BECOMES THE SOLE JAGUAR PUBLISHER

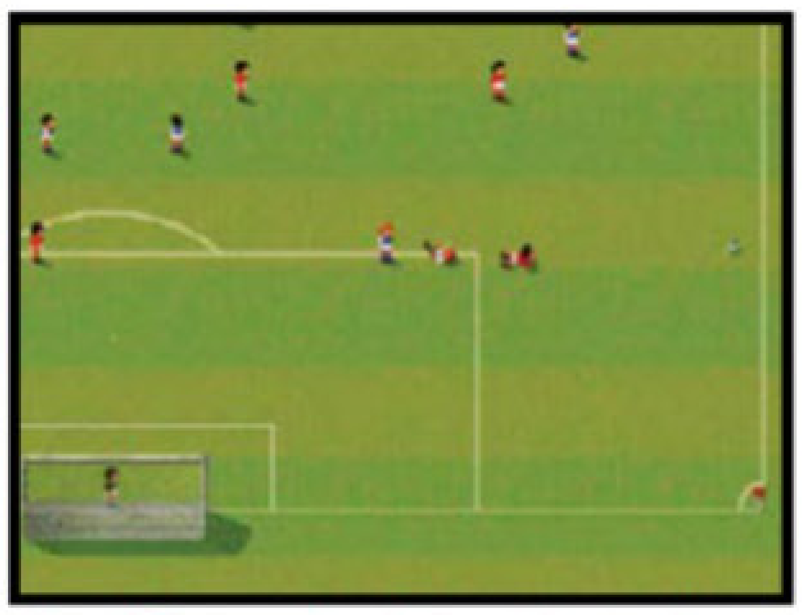
2000 TELEGAMES STARTS PUBLISHING GAMES FOR THE SONY PLAYSTATION

2004 TELEGAMES USA DROPS ALL SUPPORT FOR VINTAGE GAMING SYSTEMS

2012 NEW THIRD-PARTY LICENCES ARE GRANTED BY NINTENDO FOR BOTH THE 3DS AND WII U

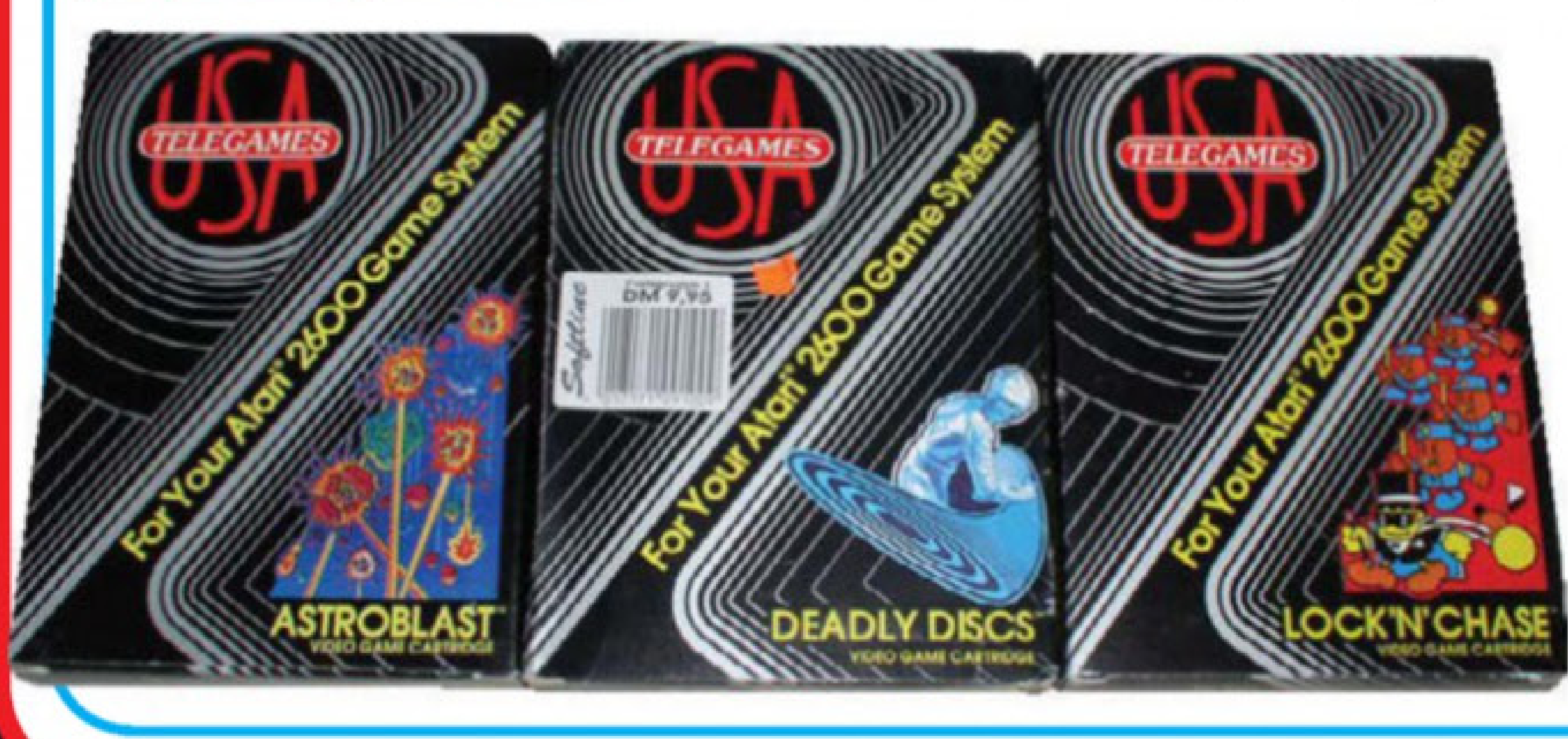


» [Game Boy Color] Telegames was responsible for bringing Atari's classic *Yars' Revenge* to Nintendo's handheld.



» [Jaguar] Telegames released an improved version of *International Sensible Soccer* for the Jaguar.

» The packaging for Telegames USA's Atari 2600 titles was just adapted from the original M-Network boxes.



then went on to republish several of the games it had previously developed under the Telegames brand as well as buying the back catalogue of previous client Xonox and that of Mattel's Atari 2600 label M-Network.

"I was directing 25 developers and so had very little time to actually develop games," recalls Ed Salvo, who was chiefly responsible for producing many of these games. "I kicked out a couple for the VCS, but spent a lot of my time teaching and developing algorithms for the others." Ed also remembers what led to the demise of Apollo and formation of VSS/Sunrise. "Four of us working at Apollo left when it appeared that Pat (Roper, Apollo boss) was not taking the right steps to stay in business. I was director of development, Terry

> **"I nearly had a heart attack when I saw people online talking about Zero 5 being published by Telegames"**
> MATTHEW GOSLING



» [Jaguar] Programmed by Teque London, *Brutal Sports Football* was the very first third-party release for the Jaguar.

Grantham was director of finance, Mike Smith was director of operations and George was head of accounting. The four of us formed VSS and Sunrise with the idea to both develop and distribute our own games."

With the two sides of the company now in full flow, Pete Mortimer realised that Telegames needed to move with the times. Sales of games for the vintage systems had been declining and its manufacturers were no longer providing the support Telegames needed. Despite snubbing Atari early on in the Telegames years, the 2600 had turned out to be a profitable avenue for the company and so it decided to continue to support the California-based company. This led to Telegames becoming the very first third-party publisher for the Atari Lynx. "We released *Ultimate Chess Challenge*, which became the first ever officially licensed third-party Lynx game," recalls Pete. "Over the next five years we went on to release many major hits on the Lynx such as *Double Dragon*, *Desert Strike* and *Super Off-Road*." This was a bold move for Telegames as it was now playing with the big boys – licensing big name titles and forming new relationships with the likes of Tradewest and Krisalis.



» The Telegames Personal Arcade was a ColecoVision compatible console that featured improved controllers.

Telegames was now positioned as the largest third-party publisher for the Lynx and this also saw it expand its retail distribution in the UK, as Pete explains. "The retail side continued to be strong over here and so we opened five new shops in various city centres as well as signing new distribution deals with people like Game."

Telegames's success on the Atari Lynx naturally saw it sign up to be among the first third-party publishers to develop and publish games for Atari's incoming 64-bit Jaguar console. Pete was understandably proud of this, revealing: "When Atari announced the Jaguar system Telegames started developing games for that system right away. Again, as with the Lynx, we were the first third-party company to release a game for the Jaguar in *Brutal Sports Football*." Jaguar development continued on both sides of the pond with games such as the aforementioned *Brutal Sports Football*, *Sensible Soccer* and *Virtuoso* being developed in the UK, while games such as *Tiny Toon Adventures* (for Atari), *Double Dragon V* and *Troy Aikmen NFL Football* (both for Tradewest) were being produced in the US.

Unfortunately the Jaguar failed to perform in the market and this left Telegames contemplating many existing projects. "When Atari ceased production we had a lot of games in various stages of development both in the UK and USA," explains Pete, "which we had to abandon as the market was not able to support the sales that were needed to make the games viable." But Atari's demise did lead to an interesting opportunity for Telegames, as part of the reverse merger with hard drive manufacturer JTS in 1996 Atari had to agree to continue to support the Jaguar for another year. Rather than go through the expense of doing this themselves Atari sub-licensed a number of games to Telegames that were already finished and ready to be published. These included some big name titles such as *Iron Soldier 2* and *Breakout 2000*, as well as several technically impressive original games such as *World Tour Racing* and *Zero 5*.

Unfortunately this deal led to some bad feelings among the developers of several of the games in question, as they had never been fully paid by Atari and were surprised to see that Telegames was publishing these games all of a sudden. Matthew Gosling of Caspian Software, who programmed the superb *Zero 5*, was one of those unfortunate individuals who got burnt, telling us, "I nearly had a heart attack when I saw people online talking about *Zero 5* being published by Telegames. We thought that someone must have just spread some bullshit rumour, but the Telegames website suggested otherwise. We had absolutely no idea that this had happened, we were not consulted at all and we never got paid for it. Atari maintained that it was a beta and sold it to Telegames on the understanding that it was an unfinished product. This didn't stop Atari from getting a royalty on sales of the 'unfinished product', but that royalty ▶



» [Atari Lynx] *The Fidelity Ultimate Chess Challenge* was the very first officially licensed third-party Lynx game.



» [Atari Lynx] Ed Salvo programmed the excellent Lynx conversion of the popular *Super Off-Road* arcade game.

THE DNA OF... TELEGAMES

Publishing
Over the years Telegames has published lots of games written by other people, including many games for abandoned systems that may never have seen release otherwise. It has worked with many notable software houses such as Teque, Lore Design, Eclipse, Krisalis, Tradewest and Bit Corporation.

Support
One great thing that Telegames did was keep the retro platforms alive well after their commercial lives had ended. You could buy new games for pretty much every system through its mail order arm and it also published games for Lynx, ColecoVision, GBA and Jaguar after their manufacturers had dropped support.

Longevity
Telegames has been around now for over 35 years and is still going strong. The US arm is still publishing games for modern systems with recent releases for Nintendo 3DS and mobile platforms, while the UK part of the business is still supporting retro systems through its online shop and vast inventory of games.

Hardware
Another unique thing about Telegames is that it didn't just publish software, it also produced hardware too such as the Telegames Personal Arcade and the Deluxe Joystick for the Atari 2600 and 7800. Telegames also sold accessories such as handheld carry cases and magnifiers over the years too and even produced a *Soccer Kid* plush.

Top Shop
As well as its mail order distribution Telegames also had physical stores that you could go into and buy its products directly. In the Eighties and early Nineties it had several stores around the midlands in the UK as well as its huge, and now legendary, warehouse and shop in Wigston, Leicester.

Snail Mail
Many people in the UK will have memories of sending off a stamped addressed envelope to Telegames to get the latest price lists and catalogues. All you had to do was write on the back of the envelope what systems you wanted lists for and a few days later you would get your envelope back bulging with new offers.







DEFINING GAMES



Glacier Patrol (Atari 2600)

Glacier Patrol was one of the few 2600 games published by Telegames that hadn't been previously released on Mattel's M Network label. Originally programmed by Sunrise Games, this gorgeous title sees you trying to stop an alien invasion at the North Pole. The mothership is dropping blocks of ice to try and brick you into a frosty death. You must use your nuclear ray-gun to try and melt the blocks before they land and watch out for the giant snowballs. Can you survive until sunrise when the ice will melt away and foil the alien plan?



Desert Strike (Atari Lynx)

Originally developed by EA, *Desert Strike* is regarded as one of the Mega Drive's best games. It was a surprise to everyone when Telegames announced that it had licensed the game for the Lynx. Teque handled the conversion and did a fine job, as this version retains everything that made the Mega Drive one so great. Lynx *Desert Strike* is still available to buy directly from Telegames UK – the price may make a few people wince but many Lynx owners argue that it's worth every penny as it's one of the best games on the machine.



Towers I & II (Game Boy Color)

We couldn't work out which of these games to mention so as they are from the same series we thought we would mention both. The *Towers* games are first-person RPG's that originate on the Atari computers. *Towers* was first released for the Atari ST and the sequel was first seen on the 32-bit Falcon computer. It's quite incredible that both games were squeezed onto the Game Boy Color! It's also worth looking out for the Jaguar and PC version of *Towers II: Plight Of The Stargazer* too.



Iron Soldier II (Atari Jaguar CD)

The original *Iron Soldier* game was one of the best selling games for the Jaguar and one of the earliest games on the system to truly impress. The sequel is pretty much more of the same but with some subtle enhancements. You still get to control a 60-foot mech as you smash up cities, stamp on tanks and swat down helicopters, but the programmer Eclipse has improved both the graphics and sound, added new weapons and upped the levels of carnage. There is also a cut-down cartridge version too and a very fine sequel available for PSone.



» [Atari Jaguar] One of the last releases for the Jaguar, *Zero 5* is an impressive polygon space shooter.



"Their estimates of actual Atari Jaguar owners was far from credible in our opinion"
TERRY GRANTHAM

▶ is so embarrassingly low that they must have been f***ing desperate."

We asked Telegames USA boss Terry Grantham about the terms of these agreements and, while he didn't want to comment on many of them for legal reasons, he was happy to talk about the many unreleased Telegames titles. "Development was suspended on these when it became obvious that Atari was going to exit the market," Terry explains. In fact, an online petition was set up to try and get these games released. To be fair Telegames did listen, as Terry further iterates. "The next question from the Jaguar community was if they could be completed and we explained that it must be financially feasible for us to bring additional products to market. The sales results of the previously released products sadly determined that."

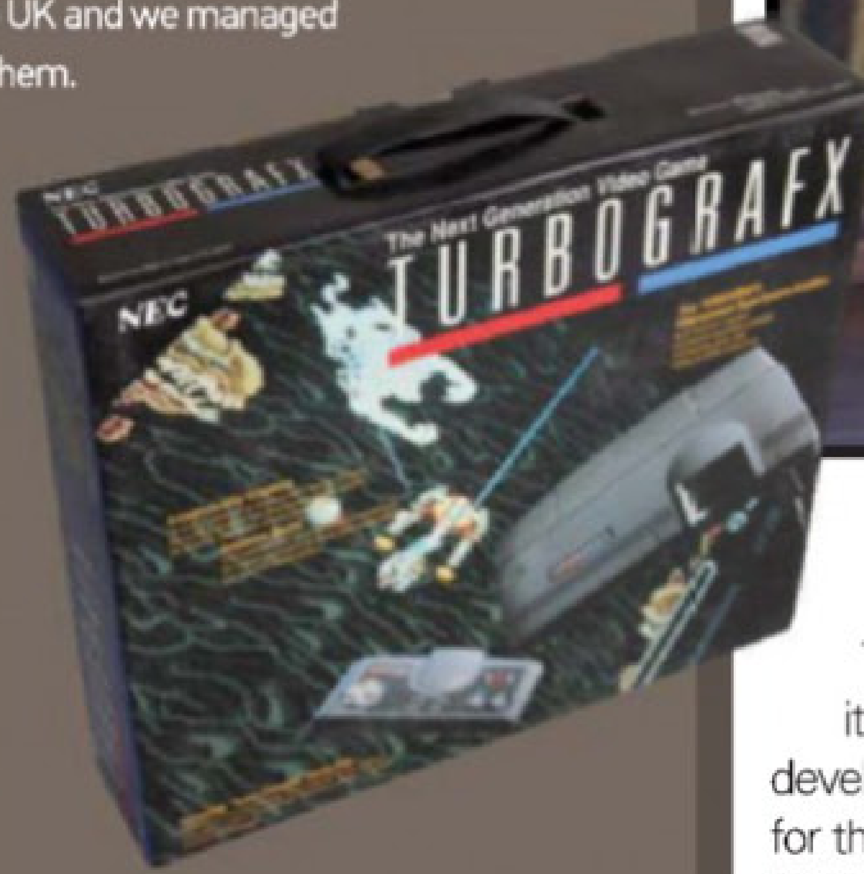
So, if sales had been so bad why did Telegames agree to the Atari deal in the first place? "Previous info released by Atari was dramatically overstated if actual software sales are used as a hardware measurement," explained Terry. "Their estimate of actual Atari Jaguar owners was far from credible in our opinion." We asked UK boss Pete Mortimer about the demise of Atari too, and he had an interesting story to tell us. "When Atari closed their European warehouse we bought all their stock, which, when we agreed it, did not worry us too much. However when three days later five articulated lorries arrived at our warehouse all loaded to the top with product it created 36 hours of non-stop unloading and putting it all into our warehouse!"

He also commented on the many unfinished games and prototypes. "We lost a lot of the masters in a tornado in the USA so some titles will never even be possible to reproduce."

TELEGAMES TURBOGRAFX

Back in 1990 Japanese electronics giant NEC was planning to release its best-selling PC Engine console in Europe. It had been released in North America the previous year as the newly packaged TurboGrafx-16. The "16" had been added to promote it's 16-bit graphics chip and help it compete with the Sega Genesis. But sales in North America were slow and it was floundering next to the ever-popular NES and Sega's new console, which was starting to gain a foothold. This left NEC with a decision to make and it quickly decided not to release the console on these shores. But what was it to do with all the games and consoles that they had already manufactured. Telegames's Pete Mortimer explains.

"NEC had decided not to release the TurboGrafx in the UK and we managed to buy a few containers of hardware and software from them. We then distributed this system in the UK, however as it would no longer be manufactured the supply of stock and lack of new games soon made it difficult to support and it was only sold in limited numbers." The PAL version of the machine is grey, as opposed to black, and drops the "16" from the name. It also provides RGB output as standard, opting for an additional RF modulator that must be plugged in to support traditional output. The console will run all North American games but requires an adapter to run Japanese PC Engine games. No PAL version of the Super CD-ROM was ever produced but it will work with the North American model.




» [PlayStation] *Iron Soldier 3* was a very worthy sequel to the excellent Jaguar games and also appeared on the ill-fated NUON.

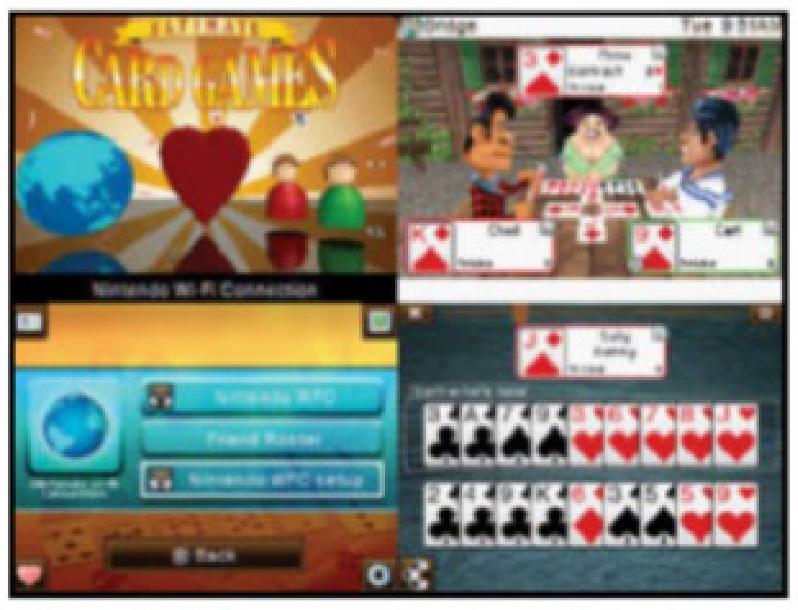
So where does this leave Telegames today? Although the US side of the business no longer supports the vintage systems and has ceased all mail order operations, Pete's UK arm is still going strong. "We have managed over the years with both the Lynx and Jaguar to get small quantities of games made," Pete explains, adding, "however that has been expensive and very difficult to continue due to lack of parts and these games having to be mostly handmade. We will continue to try and support the Lynx and Jaguar systems, however it is very difficult to cover costs and source parts." Will we ever see any of the many unreleased games? Unfortunately, Pete doesn't think so. "Sadly a lot of the unfinished games will never make it to completion, it's just not financially viable."

So where does Pete see his side of the company heading going forward? "The UK company is slowly pulling out of mail order with the intention of continued support for the products we have developed and as many of the Lynx and Jaguar items we can continue to find," he tells us. "It may be that in the future we re-launch with other retro items or add some of the newer systems into the mix." So what about Telegames USA? Interestingly, it's still going strong. After both developing and publishing new games for the PlayStation, Game Boy Advance, Nintendo DS and PC it has now moved onto the current-gen Nintendo systems and Apple's mobile platforms. Telegames US has already released several games for the 3DS, as well as iOS, and also has a licence to develop games for the Wii U. Terry Grantham for one is very excited about these new beginnings for the company. "We are thrilled to return to consoles but will continue to actively support portables as well," he tells us. "We have projects in design that we feel will not only maximise the use of the console features but also establish new standards for gameplay interaction via the Wii U GamePad screen."

So the Telegames story is actually one without an ending, as both parts of the company are still going strong and still headed up by their original founders. You can still find Telegames titles on the shelves of local games stores, as well as being able to buy from the company directly. It is still supporting the classic games systems through telegames.co.uk and has the largest inventory of retro games and hardware anywhere in the world. We don't know where the Telegames story will go from here but it's nice to see a company from the past still going strong. It's clear that everyone involved in Telegames still has a passion for games and the people who play them, and we hope that continues for many years to come. *



» [PlayStation] *Rascal Racers* is a popular *Mario Kart* clone for Sony's debut console.


» [Nintendo DS] Telegames has become well known for its numerous casual games on the Nintendo handhelds.

Special thanks to: Pete Mortimer, Terry Grantham, Matthew Gosling and Ed Salvo.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Pete Mortimer

Pete continues to run Telegames to this very day and is still the sole person in charge of the UK company. He tends to have a much quieter schedule nowadays but still remains dedicated to the unwavering support of classic videogaming systems, and he even hand-builds new Atari Lynx and Atari Jaguar games to order.

Terry Grantham

As well as still being the president of Telegames USA, Terry Grantham is also a certified public accountant practising in Gun Barrel City, Texas. He is still widely involved with the day to day running of Telegames though, and you will often see him waxing lyrical about the brand across various gaming websites and publications.

Ed Salvo

After leaving Telegames Ed went to Harris Corp as a programmer on financial systems. When he left Harris he went back to his former employer and ported *Super Off-Road* to the Atari Lynx. After this he developed *Double Dragon V* for the Atari Jaguar. After a spell at Hyphen Solutions he retired in 2004.



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TOP 25 NINTENDO 64 GAMES

Retro Gamer readers have cast their votes and top developers have had their say – these are your top 25 games on Nintendo's groundbreaking console. Join Nick Thorpe for the countdown…



Jet Force Gemini

DEVELOPER: RARE **YEAR:** 1999
GENRE: THIRD-PERSON SHOOTER

25 **Kicking off your** top 25 is the first of many Rare games. *Jet Force Gemini* combines elements of platform and shooting games, both genres in which the developer was proficient during the N64 era. As a result, you'll have a lot of exploring to do as you seek to push back the forces of Mizar, the game's antagonist. Customisable multiplayer modes round off an accomplished package, as is common for Rare games.





International Superstar Soccer 64

DEVELOPER: KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT OSAKA
YEAR: 1997 **GENRE:** SPORTS

24 **Konami's follow-up** to its SNES hit *ISS Deluxe* was a huge presentation upgrade, taking advantage of the N64's power. Aided by the inclusion of some hilarious commentary, the new 3D visuals greatly enhanced the game's sense of realism. And while the game didn't feature real player names, it was easily a match for *FIFA 98: Road To The World Cup*.

Excitebike 64

DEVELOPER: LEFT FIELD PRODUCTIONS
YEAR: 2000 **GENRE:** RACING

23 ***Excitebike's* return in** 2000 was as welcome as it was unexpected, with the series having largely lain dormant since the 1984 debut of its NES precursor. The dirt track racing proved a good fit for the move to 3D, and the addition of mini-games and a track editor gave the game real longevity. Unfortunately, *Excitebike 64*'s release was delayed until the N64's mid-2001 decline in the UK, perhaps explaining its low position in your chart.



Developer Top Picks

Blast Corps

"I remember when *Blast Corps* came along – the crew was gathered around an N64 saying, "No way! How are they doing that?" I love seeing creativity and innovation in gaming, and *Blast Corps* didn't just manage to do it on a technical level, but they innovated along the lines of the actual game design"

Doug TenNapel
(Earthworm Jim, The Neverhood)



Beetle Adventure Racing

DEVELOPER: PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT
YEAR: 1999 **GENRE:** RACING

22 **Even the greatest** of games can look like losers on paper – after all, "an Italian plumber goes running and occasionally jumps on turtles" is the no-frills description of one of the most important games of all time. So it is that we come to *Beetle Adventure Racing*, a licensed racing game in which players can only choose a single model of car – but unlike the likes of *Ferrari F355 Challenge*, the single model is a modest economy car. However, in spite of a distinctly unexciting premise, *Beetle Adventure Racing* delivers a surprisingly good experience.

The key word in the title is "Adventure" as the game's six tracks has a distinctive theme, from the Egyptian-themed Sunset Sands to the quintessentially English Coventry Cove. *Beetle Adventure Racing* is a game in which you'll rarely stick to the track, too. In a similar fashion to arcade racers such as *GTI Club* and *Hydro Thunder*, each track is filled with shortcuts and alternative routes, allowing players to crash through barns, tear down narrow side streets and even drive through caves. These secret routes often hide items, from nitro boosts to points used to unlock extra arenas in the multiplayer Beetle Battle mode.



Diddy Kong Racing

■ **DEVELOPER:** RARE ■ **YEAR:** 1997
■ **GENRE:** RACING

21 **15 years before** Sonic and his mates raced each other across land, sea and air, Rare busted out planes and hovercrafts in an attempt to claim *Mario Kart*'s throne. Depending on the course, players could choose either of these vehicles or karts, with drivers such as Banjo and a pre-booze Conker joining Diddy Kong on the starting grid.

The real strength of *Diddy Kong Racing* lies in its excellent Adventure Mode, which provides a satisfying single-player experience unlike that offered by *Mario Kart*. Winning regular races unlocks boss races, beating bosses opens up coin-collecting challenges, and so on – there's a hell of a lot to do over the game's 30 courses before you ever get any other players involved.



Super Smash Bros

■ **DEVELOPER:** HAL LABORATORY ■ **YEAR:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

20 **The N64 is** one of the all-time great multiplayer consoles, in part due to Nintendo's shrewd inclusion of four controller ports on the console, and party-oriented games like *Super Smash Bros* helped to cement that reputation by allowing Mario, Pikachu, Link and Samus to beat each other up.

The key to the wide appeal of *Super Smash Bros* is its deliberate avoidance of fighting game conventions. The game's violence is cartoonish, the controls are simple and even traditional life bars are discarded, in favour of a percentage system that has no definite knock-out point. Platform-based stages and randomly generated items mix things up further, creating a chaotic environment in which everyone has the potential to win a round.



"I'd never played anything quite like it before, nor have I since. The combination of the great characters, writing, music and quirky Japaneseness (it's a word) make it a very unique experience"
Nathan Wind

Mystical Ninja Starring Goemon

■ **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT OSAKA
■ **YEAR:** 1997 ■ **GENRE:** ACTION-ADVENTURE

19 **While Goemon and** chums starred in three N64 adventures, it's the first one that makes the cut here. This action-adventure follows the titular hero and his companions Ebisumaru, Yae and the mechanical ninja Sasuke, as they try to work out just who was behind a UFO attack which turned the Japanese Oedo Castle into a European-style castle.

This is one of the more surprising entries in your top 25, as sales weren't tremendous and critical reception was mixed. However, it has cult appeal – the game's medieval Japanese setting and bizarre sense of humour give it a unique boost.

Paper Mario

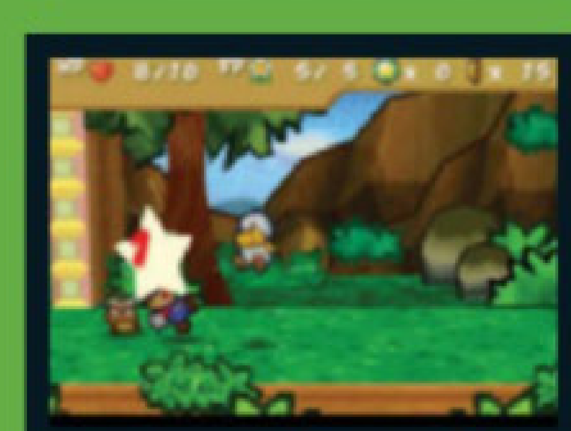
■ **DEVELOPER:** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS ■ **YEAR:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** RPG

18 **Much like Square's** SNES outing *Super Mario RPG*, *Paper Mario* drops Mario and his friends into a role-playing game with an eye-catching visual style – indeed, *Paper Mario* was announced as *Super Mario RPG 2*. But where the SNES game tried to punch above its weight with pre-rendered 3D visuals, the N64 game goes in the opposite direction, with every character represented as a lovingly drawn paper-thin cut-out instead.

Though it operated a menu-based combat system, *Paper Mario* included an active element in battles with the use of the 'action command' system – button presses timed with attacks or guards would increase the effectiveness of your attacks, elaborating on *Final Fantasy VIII*'s implementation of a similar system. However, it was the setting rather than the mechanics that made *Paper Mario*, with the Mushroom Kingdom coming alive thanks to Goomba families, a green-eyed Luigi and Bowser's unceasing belligerence.









Pokémon Snap

DEVELOPER: HAL LABORATORY/PAX SOFTNICA
YEAR: 1999 GENRE: PHOTOGRAPHY

17 **A first-person rail** shooter of a rather different kind, *Pokémon Snap* challenges players to shoot photos of Nintendo's collectable critters. You play a Pokémon photographer who travels through a variety of environments in a small rail cart, taking photos which are then scored by Professor Oak. Higher points are awarded for keeping the Pokémon in the centre of the frame, catching it doing interesting things and getting more than one of the same species in shot.

It's a simple game, but one enhanced by the level of interaction afforded by items which can be thrown – food will lure Pokémon in for better shots, while pester balls will make them angry and extract them from hiding places. While the selection of Pokémon featured is pretty small at just 63 of the original 151, their interesting animations and the diversity of the game's seven courses hook players easily.





1080° Snowboarding

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD YEAR: 1998 GENRE: SPORTS

16 **Nintendo EAD isn't** traditionally thought of as a great developer of sports games, but *1080° Snowboarding* isn't a traditional Nintendo EAD game. While Japanese staff made up the bulk of the team, the coding was handled by two Englishmen, ex-Argonaut programmer Giles Goddard and Colin Reed, who has most recently been working on the *Forza Motorsport* series. Compared to contemporary snowboarding games like the *Cool Boarders* series, *1080° Snowboarding* took a more realistic approach to the sport, placing a greater emphasis on technical aspects such as correctly landing after tricks.

That emphasis on realism carried over to the game's visuals, and *1080° Snowboarding* was graphically incredible upon release. Sunlight was reflected in the snow in a manner quite unlike anything else seen at the time, characters didn't exhibit the joints between limbs that were common in so many other games, and there was even a little lens flare on the camera. The gameplay was equally impressive, thanks to level designs which included hidden routes and a variety of natural places to perform tricks, securing *1080° Snowboarding*'s status as an unexpected but undisputed hit.

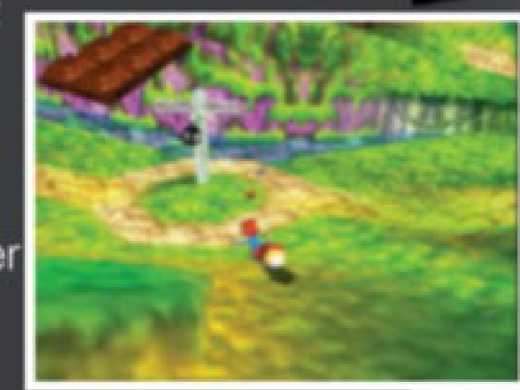


"I love the way it concentrates on racing rather than tricks, the sunsets and reflections look great, even the menu was fun. You also get to play as a panda"
Fightersmegamix

Conker's Bad Fur Day

DEVELOPER: RARE
YEAR: 2001 GENRE: PLATFORM

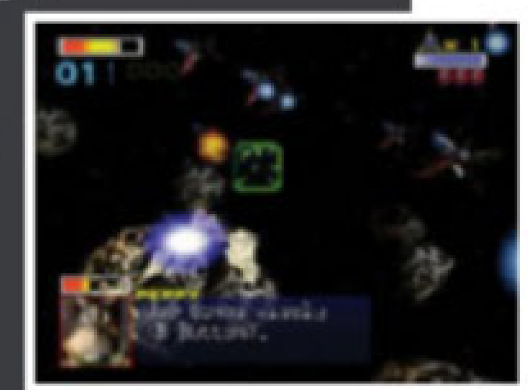
15 ***Twelve Tales: Conker 64*** didn't stand out from the crowd when it was announced, so Rare extensively retooled its planned family-friendly platformer into the tale of a foul-mouthed alcoholic squirrel. The changes clearly worked out – after all, who can forget their first encounter with the Great Mighty Poo?



Lylat Wars

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR: 1997 GENRE: SHOOT-'EM-UP

14 **Better known as** *Star Fox 64* elsewhere (including the 3DS update), this on-rails shooter bundled the N64's Rumble Pak peripheral. The game expanded on its SNES predecessor by offering free-flight boss areas. It also gave us the "do a barrel roll" internet phenomenon…



WWF No Mercy

DEVELOPER: AKI CORPORATION
YEAR: 2000 GENRE: BEAT-'EM-UP

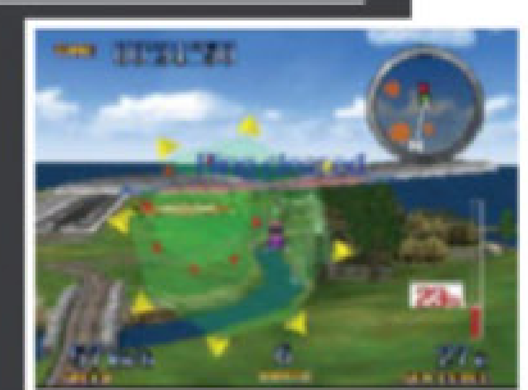
13 **The best wrestling** game ever? It could be – fans still love its refined grappling system over a decade later. *No Mercy* perfectly encapsulates the popular Attitude era of the WWF, and is packed with big names like The Rock, Stone Cold Steve Austin and The Undertaker.



Pilotwings 64

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO / PARADIGM ENTERTAINMENT
YEAR: 1996 GENRE: FLIGHT SIMULATOR

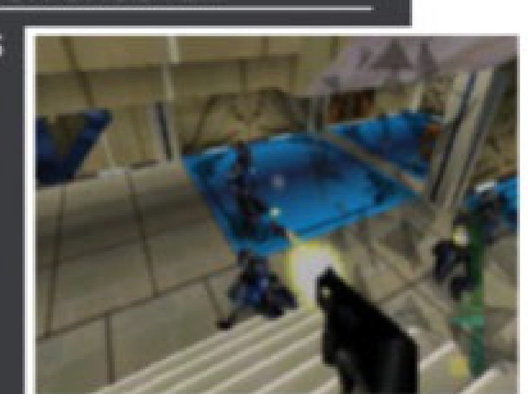
12 **Just as *Pilotwings*** had demonstrated the Mode 7 backgrounds of the SNES, *Pilotwings 64* is a spectacular demonstration of the 3D environments that the N64 offers. Using a jetpack and hang glider in the main game is fun, but the bonus cannon event remains our favourite.



Perfect Dark

DEVELOPER: RARE
YEAR: 2000 GENRE: FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

11 **Trying to top** the success of *GoldenEye* was an unenviable task, but one which Rare set out to achieve with this sci-fi shooter. As a late release that utilised the N64's Expansion Pak accessory, *Perfect Dark* boasted substantially improved visuals over its predecessor.





> "Rare at the height of its powers. Powers that would extend throughout its N64 canon, in fairness, but this is the kind of original concept that's missing from Nintendo's consoles today"
> **Team Alfie**

Blast Corps

■ **DEVELOPER:** RARE ■ **YEAR:** 1997 ■ **GENRE:** ACTION

10 **Smashing things is** fun. That isn't an opinion, that's a universal truth known even to babies, who giggle as they clumsily knock over their building blocks at nursery. *Blast Corps* recognises this fact, and gives the player the opportunity to smash buildings in a multitude of ways. This usually has a purpose, such as clearing a path for a nuclear truck, but you'll never care too much about that because the fun of demolition is always your primary concern.

The vehicles on offer allow players to demolish buildings by sliding the tail of a truck, attacking from the side with extending arms and even just charging straight in. But our favourite is the jetpack, which allows you to soar into the air before raining down destruction upon the helpless concrete constructs.

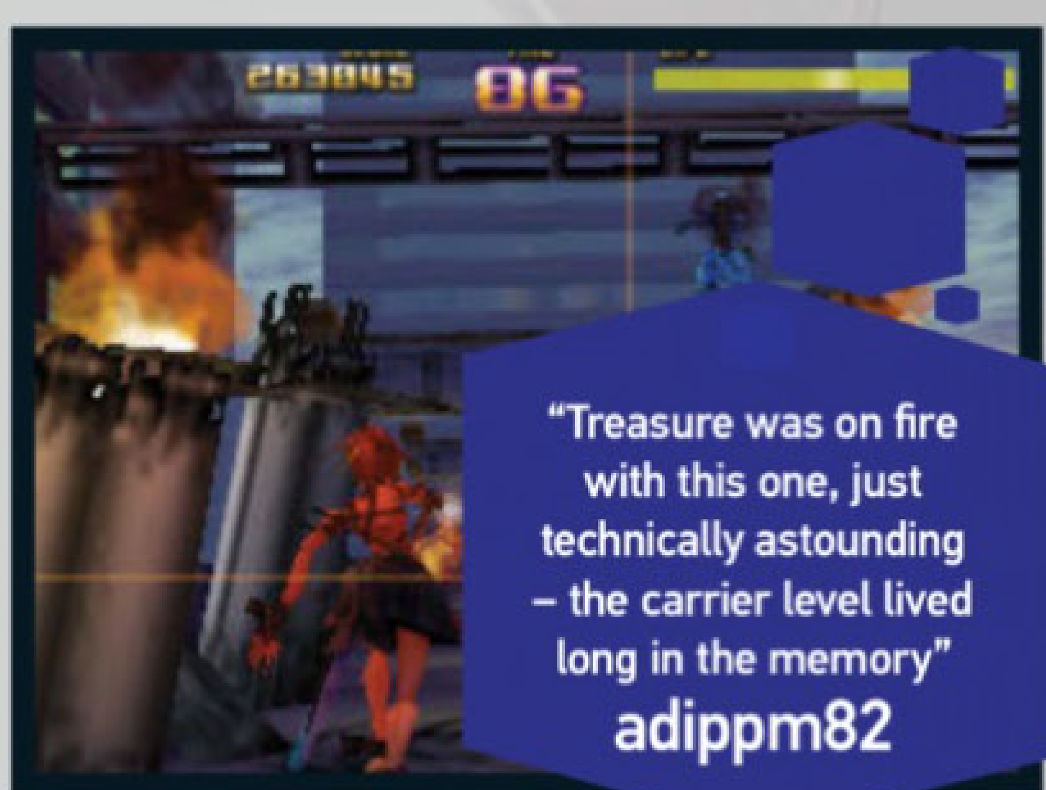
Banjo-Kazooie

■ **DEVELOPER:** RARE ■ **YEAR:** 1999 ■ **GENRE:** PLATFORM

9 **We've already seen** the last of Rare's N64 platformers pop up in this list, and the first joins it here. *Banjo-Kazooie* was one of the games which gave Rare a formidable reputation for crafting 3D platform games, and for good reason. The dynamic duo of a bear and a bird employed a variety of different techniques in their quest to rescue Banjo's sister Tooty.

Drawing on Rare's design work on the *Donkey Kong Country* series for the SNES, item collecting was a huge part of *Banjo-Kazooie*, to the point that the pause screen tracks seven different types of pick-ups as well as displaying your life and energy. Each stage is packed with things to do as a result, making the game a dream for both intrepid explorers and completion fanatics.





> "Treasure was on fire with this one, just technically astounding – the carrier level lived long in the memory"
> **adippm82**

Sin & Punishment

■ **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE

■ **YEAR:** 2000 ■ **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP

8 **The N64 wasn't** popular in Japan, where it finished in third place behind the Saturn, and there are few essential import games as a result. But if there's one game that made owning an import-ready N64 worthwhile, it was *Sin & Punishment*. Treasure's game is much like a 3D *Cabal*, with the N64 pad allowing you to move and aim independently. As an arcade-style blaster the game is on the short side – a proficient player can beat it in less than two hours – but it's packed full of bosses and set-pieces that ensure you'll return to it. *Sin & Punishment* is now available to international audiences, as it was translated and released on the Wii's Virtual Console.

Wave Race 64

■ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD

■ **YEAR:** 1996 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

7 **Sometimes, a game** does just one thing so well that it has the potential to overshadow everything else in the game. In *Wave Race 64*, the sequel to a tame top-down racer for the Game Boy, that thing was water. No other game captured the look and feel of racing on water in quite the same way and while it might not have retained the visual impact it had in 1996, *Wave Race 64*'s water physics remain hugely impressive.

The rest of the game is impressive too, due largely to excellent track design. It doesn't have the exuberance of a game like *Mario Kart 64* or *Diddy Kong Racing*, but it does boast some spectacular graphical effects.





F-Zero X

■ **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD

■ **YEAR:** 1998 ■ **GENRE:** RACING

6 **If you've never** played *F-Zero X* before, you might be looking at it here and wondering what all the fuss was – and is still – about, but allow us to put your doubts to rest. The game looks incredibly sparse, but this deliberate visual restraint allows it to convey an unrivalled sense of speed at a high frame rate. Moving into 3D visuals allowed Nintendo EAD to experiment with some crazy anti-gravity track designs that just weren't possible on the SNES, with players racing inside and outside of pipes, as well as around full loops. There's even a random track generator, which extends the game's lifespan far beyond other racing games.

Developer Top Picks

Mario Kart 64

"I remember playing it in four-player mode at the King Of The Jungle offices and wanting to murder anyone that red-shelled me! It was manically addictive in multiplayer mode, and definitely an office favourite for a while. Nothing better than getting the invincibility star and squashing all your mates"

Raffaele Cecco
(Exolon, Stormlord)

The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time

"Life just ground to a halt for two or three weeks while I completed the game. The simplicity of control with the wide variety of things you can do is just what I want from a game like this. Miyamoto at his best once again"

Jon Ritman
(Match Day, Head Over Heels)

Wave Race 64

"I used to be a programmer for many years, so when games appeared that were technically spectacular, I not only appreciated them on a gameplay level but on a 'how the heck did they do that?' level. *Wave Race 64* had me scratching my head as the simulation and feel of zipping across really choppy water was excellent"

David Perry
(Earthworm Jim, MDK)

Diddy Kong Racing

"It was a great game to be involved with, and I loved the twist of the added storyline and adventure element. It wasn't just a racing game, but had a little of everything. The Rare sense of humour, and the cross between *Mario World* with a racing genre, just made it exciting and new"

Kevin Bayliss
(Killer Instinct, Diddy Kong Racing)

GoldenEye 007

"If I'm only allowed one, it's clearly *GoldenEye*. I was so addicted it quite literally caused *Alundra*'s release to be late. I kept thinking about it when writing the English version of *Alundra* and taking breaks to play it, which turned into a diversion of an hour or more every time"

Victor Ireland
(Lunar: The Silver Star, Alundra)

Mario Kart 64

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
YEAR: 1996 **GENRE:** RACING

5 **Hands up: how** many of you have sworn over being blasted with lightning on the Wario Stadium jump? Quite a few, we're guessing. *Mario Kart*'s multiplayer has always drawn out a variety of emotions, creating memories that have propelled the game into your top five.

The first 3D *Mario Kart* game introduced many recurring elements of the series, including mini-turbos for drifts, fake item boxes and the dreaded leader-seeking blue shell, while removing the CPU-only special items found in *Super Mario Kart*. But for all of these improvements made to the already sterling formula, the biggest upgrade came from the hardware itself – amazing four-player split-screen multiplayer.





"I know most people will prefer *Ocarina Of Time*, but *Majora's Mask* proved that the series could take a turn to the dark side, and do it so well"
gunbladelad

The Legend Of Zelda: Majora's Mask

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR: 2000 **GENRE:** ACTION-RPG

4 **Few games have** a more compelling premise than that of *Majora's Mask*. Faced with the impending disaster of a falling moon that will obliterate Termina in just three days, Link must travel back and forth in time to save the world. Dungeons follow the excellent template set out by *Ocarina Of Time*, but other mechanics take centre stage in *Majora's Mask*. With control over time allowing the player to work out the daily routines of the townspeople and a variety of masks to affect their reactions to Link, the game features a deeper level of interaction with other characters than prior *Zelda* games.

GoldenEye 007

DEVELOPER: RARE **YEAR:** 1997 **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER

3 **Miles in front** of the fourth-placed game is Rare's N64 masterwork. It might have arrived two years after the film, but that didn't hurt this James Bond tie-in one bit – after all, it would have been churlish to criticise the timeliness of a game this good.

The key to Rare's approach was a flexible adherence to the movie's script. Stages were crafted from very small sequences of the film or even made up entirely. What's more, the game's excellently designed stages included a variety of objectives that could be tackled in the order of the player's choosing, giving a sense of freedom that was uncommon in games of the time.

But the single-player mode is only half the story. Given the longevity it lent to the game, it's surprising that multiplayer wasn't a key part of the game's design from the beginning. The mode was added late in development, but proved to be an important selling point for the console as well as the game – the superb deathmatch mode was the perfect advert for the N64's four control ports, and helped to cement the system as the machine of choice for multiplayer fanatics.

While Rare would later develop its first-person shooter template further with *Perfect Dark*, readers have remembered the impact that *GoldenEye* had upon release. As well as being a rare example of a worthwhile movie licence, the game proved that consoles could host first-person shooters that were at least as good as those on PC, if not better. Keyboard warriors could keep *Quake* – N64 owners were too busy crowding around the TV for split-screen *GoldenEye*.



"It absolutely nailed the atmosphere of being James Bond, from the comedy enemies to the ricocheting bullet sounds and the awesome music – somehow it's much closer to the movie feel than most Bond games that followed"
Qazimod

READERS' CHOICE NINTENDO 64



The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD
YEAR: 1998 GENRE: ACTION-RPG

2 **Only narrowly missing** the top spot is the first 3D *Zelda* game, one of the greatest games ever designed. Link's fifth quest sees him once again taking on Ganondorf, seeking to prevent him from obtaining the Triforce and dooming Hyrule. The move to 3D granted the series an unprecedented sense of scale, which hits players the first time they set out across Hyrule Field – this was a huge world with lots to experience, from riding the horse Epona to entering the pit of Jabu-Jabu's belly. Time is the game's key mechanic, with Link appearing in both child and adult forms, each with different abilities – young Link can crawl through small spaces, while adult Link can use the hookshot, for example.

Much like *Super Mario 64*, *Ocarina Of Time* provided key advances in the design of 3D games. Rather than turning the game into a hybrid puzzle-platformer, Nintendo gave Link the ability to jump automatically as he reached platform edges, allowing the player to work out the puzzles without worrying about control. In order to ensure that players could fight battles adequately, Z-targeting was introduced, with players holding the Z button to lock on to an enemy and make movements relative to its position.

It isn't quite perfect – Nintendo notably addressed the design flaws around the Water Temple in the 3DS version of the game – but it's as close as anyone had seen in 1998, and launched to universal acclaim, selling over 7 million copies. As a result, *Ocarina Of Time*'s design has formed the basis of every 3D *Zelda* game released since. Those sequels have made the formula familiar, but *Ocarina Of Time* was an utterly groundbreaking game, an expansive and engrossing adventure that played like a dream – a game truly worthy of the word "epic".



Super Mario 64

DEVELOPER: NINTENDO EAD YEAR: 1996 GENRE: PLATFORM

1 ***Super Mario 64* isn't** just a great game – it changed gaming forever. For players, it was a rare treat. 2D *Mario* platformers had been straightforward affairs – even if there were hidden exits to find and a variety of abilities for Mario to use, the aim of the game was usually still to make it from your starting point to a single finishing point. *Super Mario 64*'s levels were wide environments designed for exploration, and the whole game changed around that fact. Staple enemies like Goombas were suddenly much easier to avoid and became more of a minor hindrance than a serious threat, in part thanks to Mario's new health meter. Goals, rather than being points at which the level finishes, were now tied to objectives – beating bosses, collecting red coins, winning races and so on. Each stage had multiple goals, and the sight of a well-placed star outside of your objective often caused players to pause and try to figure out how to reach them ahead of time. This non-linearity extended further, as the stars opened up new stages in batches, meaning that it was hard to ever become truly stuck.

For developers, *Super Mario 64* was a masterclass. Despite a lack of prior experience with 3D game design, Nintendo delivered a full slate of impressively designed levels, filled with challenging and inventive objectives. Even the simple act of moving Mario was a joy – the N64's boldly different control pad gave many players their first taste of the subtleties of analogue control, with a light push producing a slow tiptoe and a heavy push producing a full-on sprint. That wasn't all, as Mario gained new abilities like the triple jump and backflip, which proved useful for leaping those hard-to-cross gaps. Particularly pleasurable was the act of trying to force Mario up a hill, watching his legs working ever harder until he fell forward and slid back down.

The platform genre had a variety of competing designs in the early days of 3D, from conservative 2.5D efforts such as *Pandemonium* to the idiosyncratic approach of *Jumping Flash*. However, it's easy to forget this, as *Super Mario 64* quickly rendered almost all of them obsolete and subsequent games such as *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Gex 3D* borrowed heavily from its design. Design features we now take for granted, such as dynamic cameras, owe a heavy debt to the work of Shigeru Myamoto and his team.

All of this, and *Super Mario 64* was a launch game. It was an almost impossibly convincing reason to buy the console on day one, which remained compelling years after the hype had faded. Yes, this is your top N64 game – but there's a strong argument to be made that it is the best game ever, too.

Five Reasons Why It's Great

1 It didn't just clone the 2D gameplay, instead adapting the *Mario* experience to a 3D environment.

2 The non-linear progression left players spoiled for choice when choosing the next stage to challenge.

3 The game's precise control was unlike anything else available, instantly justifying the N64's analogue stick.

4 Sliding down an icy slope while racing a penguin remains one of gaming's greatest joys.

5 Even after you had collected all 120 stars, there was still one last secret to find…

Developer Top Picks

"My favourite is *Super Mario 64*, although my kids at that time were devoted to *Pokémon Snap*"
Trip Hawkins
(Founder, EA and 3DO)

"The one that stands head and shoulders above the rest is *Super Mario 64*. It was absolutely revolutionary, getting so many things right on its first attempt and even now, three generations later, it's still as playable as it was back then"
Steve Ellis
(GoldenEye 007, Perfect Dark)

"My memories of seeing and playing it for the first time still make me smile. The design of it, the controls, the feel, the characterisation of Mario, the accessibility, the wide appeal are all things that stand out to me and make it such a fun game to play"
Mark Edmonds
(GoldenEye 007, Perfect Dark)



retro GAMER READERS' CHOICE

"If this game was released in its current form today it would still be just as well received as it was on release day, and that's the biggest compliment I can give it. I'm not sure you could say the same about any other N64 game. That's not to say they're bad – it's just that *Mario* is *that* good"

look at it sideways

THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home



» Each character has a signature weapon, but can gain new weaponry by stealing it from other racers. This is achieved by using the boomerang-style ranged attack.

» Swift kicks can push other racers away, but you'll need to become proficient with the timing of your heavy weapon swings in order to progress to the podium.

» Background elements like alien dinosaurs add a touch of character to each planet – you'll come to recognise the tracks by their landmarks as much as their unique turns.

» Every racer leans into corners and sticks their leg down, a nice piece of visual flair that accentuates the sweeping curves that appear frequently on each track.



MOTOR RAID

■ **Developer:** Sega ■ **Year:** 1997 ■ **Genre:** Racing

■ **As a reader, we're betting you remember how brilliant *Road Rash* was, with its combination of motorbikes and head-breaking melee weaponry.** You do? Fantastic! Now, do you remember how brilliant *WipEout* was, with its combination of high speed and futuristic visuals? Of course, we needn't have doubted you. Now, can you imagine how brilliant it would be if some madman decided to combine the DNA of the two games to produce a really fast futuristic motorbike game with people smacking each other in the face? Because that's what *Motor Raid* is.

Sega's futuristic racer sees players jumping onto one of four motorbikes, each bearing a different character with individual statistics and weaponry and tearing up raceways across the galaxy. Each planet has a unique environment, from the tropical oceans of Reef 8 to the frozen peaks of Junos, and boasts plenty of background features such as alien dinosaurs. It's not just the backdrops that bring *WipEout* to mind – course design is also reminiscent of the Psygnosis classic, with long, sweeping curves and plenty of steep hills.

While the basic formula of speeding and smashing your way to the front of a race will be familiar to anyone that has played *Road Rash*, *Motor Raid* brings a couple of its own features to the racetrack. A turbo meter builds during the course of the race, and allows you to charge forward with a couple of quick twists of the throttle. You also have access to certain ranged attacks – by holding both weapon buttons, you'll bring up a crosshair which allows you to lock on to other unfortunate racers and chuck your weapon at them.

Motor Raid isn't one of Sega's most fondly remembered racing games, and it's fair to say that it's one of the least original to come from the company. Its status as an unconverted game doesn't help matters here, a situation that no doubt arose from the rather awkward timing of the release. It would have been a stretch to get *Motor Raid* onto the Saturn, but it would have looked below par on the Dreamcast next to other racers on the system. That's not to say it isn't a fine game though, and fans of the games that inspired it will find a lot to like. It's certainly worth tracking down.

CONVERTED ALTERNATIVE

STUN RUNNER 1989

Atari's classic isn't too close to *Motor Raid*, but contains a similar mix of futuristic racing and combat. A variety of contemporary home versions exist and it was included on *Midway Arcade Classics 3* for the PlayStation 2, Xbox and GameCube, but we're major fans of the Atari Lynx version.



Super Cars

The Amiga enabled increasingly dazzling games to be developed, but Super Cars went back to basics. Craig Grannell wrestles his journo car around a hairpin bend to catch up with the title's developer, Shaun Southern

If the history of gaming tells us anything, it's that classic formats never really die. A good example is the top-down racer, which has been popular since the days of Atari's pioneering *Gran Track* and *Sprint* series; and it battles on today, despite smartphones packing the kind of technology that would happily run, say, *OutRun 2* (if someone at Sega would authorise a conversion – hint, hint).

The same was true in the Amiga era. Just as some games creators were aiming to wow, with the likes of *Shadow Of The Beast*'s multiple layers of parallax scrolling and sampled pan-pipes, other Amiga developers were simply seeing the jump in technology as another means to create something that was a lot of fun to play. Enter Shaun Southern, fresh from working on 8-bit racing games, such as side-on arcade fare *Kikstart II* and abstract 3D head-to-head ball-roller *Trailblazer*.

What became *Super Cars* was to be a great deal more conventional than *Trailblazer*, and was largely inspired by Atari coin-op *Super Sprint*. For Shaun, it wasn't so much the game's visual appearance that grabbed hold (he believes *Super Cars* "looked a lot better" than Atari's effort), nor specific features – instead it was about the feel of the game: "In *Super Sprint*, there was that idea of perfect controls, and the feeling that you could always just about catch up, no matter where you were… Although I'm sure they let you drive faster when you were behind!"

Developed first on the Amiga, and then converted to the Atari ST, the main thrust behind *Super Cars* was therefore abstracting the emotions and sensations of racing, rather than any attempt at simulation. "From day one, I was interested in trying to make it always seem like you were in control,

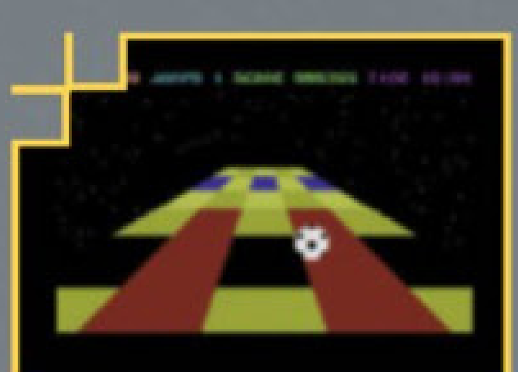


» [Amiga] Lap one and Team **RG**'s off to a storming start, although that cafe does look tempting…



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
» **DEVELOPER:** MAGNETIC FIELDS
» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PLATFORM:** AMIGA
» **GENRE:** TOP-DOWN RACER



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

TRAILBLAZER (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: C16
YEAR: 1986

KIKSTART II
SYSTEM: C64
YEAR: 1987

LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE
SYSTEM: AMIGA
YEAR: 1990

but without all of the analogue input and feedback that you get when you're really driving," explains Shaun. "Both *Lotus* and *Super Cars* had 'digital' controls – or 'twitchy' as my mate Kel at work says – but even with the limitations of digital, I tried to make it so you'd feel like you were manoeuvring the car exactly where you wanted."

As the game progressed, it became key that players could learn quickly, and even if it wasn't at all realistic, you felt like you were in charge of your vehicle. This was, says Shaun, some pretty smart thinking in hindsight: "I tried many times to replicate *Sega Rally* cornering for our later rally games, but the more real-world you make this kind of thing, the more impossible it is to control. But in my Amiga racers, you could easily drift through gaps between cars – a bit like *Asteroids*! And even after being knocked into a wall in *Super Cars*, you could catch up pretty easily – mainly because there were no cars around to get in your way. The game therefore became sort of self-balancing."

Like most Magnetic Field releases, there was no extended development for *Super Cars*, and the entire product was turned around in about six months. Still, that didn't stop the small team wanting to go a bit beyond the likes of *Super Sprint* and add extra depth. "We wanted to make it more than just racing, hence introducing screens where you'd customise cars and buy new vehicles, even dealing with salesman," says Shaun. "Some of those might seem a bit cheesy, but they really added to the depth and playability, along with just taking your mind off of the main game for a bit."

Quite a lot of thinking went into the mechanics of this aspect of *Super Cars*. There had to be balance, to ensure players didn't just speed through the game, but also enough encouragement that they didn't feel frustrated. "Upgrading your car was the ultimate purchase, but very expensive – you needed to win a lot of races," says Shaun. "But fixing damage was usually worth it, otherwise you'd get left behind." The game also included 'haggling', rather than forcing a fixed price on a car you were trying to trade-in – something of a novelty for the time. "If I remember rightly, you'd always get a better price every time you haggled, but how much depended on how rude or nice you were," recalls Shaun, adding: "If you went over a certain 'limit of ▶

» Shaun Southern has created a fantastic array of games and was able to make the C16 sing.



SUPER ARTIST

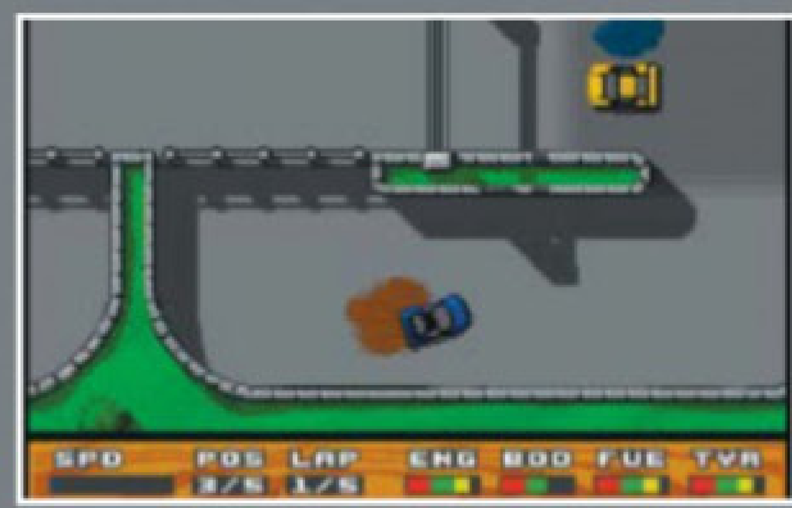
Shaun reflects on the talents of Andrew Morris

As was typical for a Magnetic Fields production, the graphics for the two *Super Cars* games were both created by Andrew Morris. Shaun recalls that Andrew drew everything by hand. "I'm not sure what tools he had in Deluxe Paint for copying bits around here and there, but I remember that he drew each rotation of all of the cars by eye too," he says, still clearly full of admiration for his ex co-conspirator.

Beyond the rugged and chunky *Super Cars* and its more refined sequel were some in-jokes, too, in the various scenes outside of racing action. "The commentary screens in *Super Cars* had commentators that were mostly based on people Andrew knew or knew of," says Shaun. "Some were flattering, and some… were not. Hmm… 'Ron and Nancy's news report'. I wonder who they were based on?!" Fortunately, some of the graphics were more complimentary, such as the shop sales girl and the car salesmen, whom Shaun remembers, respectively, were based on one of the team's sisters and a programmer that Magnetic Fields occasionally worked with at the time.

» [Amiga] Shiny! Also: expensive. We can't afford this, as we're a little bit rubbish at winning.





» [Amiga] Brown muck all over the course. You'd think they'd clean things up a bit.

abuse', you'd just get thrown out!" Mostly, though, this was a game about design, given that the technology was at the point where things that might have been tough on 8-bit machines were relatively trifling. "The Amiga had decent scrolling and the blitter, and so smooth movement was easy," says Shaun. "I think apart from playing around with the controls a fair bit, most of our time was taken up designing all of the courses."

In the end, nine tracks were created, and they all had a distinctly 'Lego road plate' feel, with plenty of 90-degree turns. They were also relatively short, which we imagined was probably intentional, to keep the game moving along at a fair lick. Shaun affirms the latter point, and explains that the regimented nature of *Super Cars* track design was in part down to technical limitations: "There were lots of 90-degree turns because we only had so many rotations for the cars, and once you were facing the right way, you would usually keep it like that until the next corner. I think we got a longer track as well that way because we made the most of the available space. Also, since the tracks were hand-drawn and not made up of tiles, there was only so much memory available for the track!"

AI was the final piece of the puzzle, determining the manner in which your opposition tackled the roads. We ask Shaun how the computer cars work, assuming they are all strictly moving along paths, follow-the-leader-style, but Shaun notes that even ostensibly simple movement patterns were in fact quite complex to program: "The thing is, because the cars could be knocked off course, they had to know to steer away from the walls towards the centre of the track, and then they had to be told to turn before the corners." The solution was a map, on two levels – due to cars being able to go over and under bridges – stating which direction the cars should be facing in at any point. "With a fair bit of fiddling, this worked well, and made them seem almost sensible, without just driving perfectly."

Looking back, Shaun's pretty happy with how *Super Cars* turned out, and the positive reviews the game received. He also, given the chance, wouldn't change a great deal about the game: "We didn't know at the time we'd get to do a sequel, and so *Super Cars* was all about getting people interested. We did, of course, have plenty of unused ideas for another game, but fortunately we could afford to wait a while, because by that point we were programming the first release in the *Lotus* series."

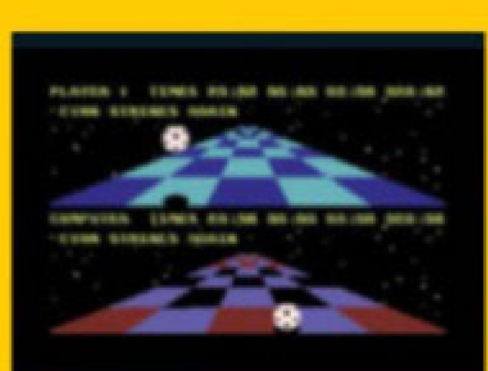
A year later, after that dalliance with 3D racing, Magnetic Fields returned to *Super Cars*. This was also around the time *Micro Machines* arrived on the NES, but that title wouldn't make its way to the Amiga for a couple of years. On *Micro Machines*, Shaun reckons the Codemasters game was "totally different from *Super Cars* graphically, but because of this it had a lot more scope," but wryly notes that "it played very similarly and was every bit as good – without trying too hard…"

For *Super Cars 2*, motivation largely arrived from ideas that simply didn't make it into the first game, such as a two-player mode, although that involved a vertical screen-split, forcing players to memorise corners or spend quite a lot of time driving into walls. "There wasn't really an alternative," says Shaun, "because split the screen horizontally, like in *Lotus*, and you'd see pretty much nothing when moving vertically!"

There were plenty of other changes, too. "Many more courses – too many, really, because we were waiting for

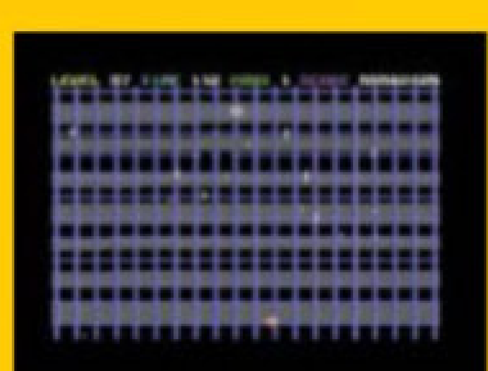
SHAUN SOUTHERN: SIX OF THE BEST

Beyond Super Cars, Shaun has created some great titles for classic systems



TRAILBLAZER

■ Shaun modestly says "all I did was turn around *Metro-Cross*" when it comes to his lightning-fast two-player racer, but *Trailblazer*'s better than the game that inspired it. It's an addictive abstract space-age tussle, and we'd love to see a contemporary mobile remake.



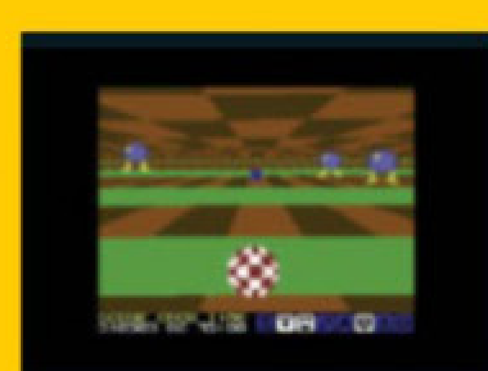
POD

■ This one almost feels like an attempt to out-Minter Minter. The grid-based shooter borrows from *Caterpillar* and *Gridrunner*, with the twist that exploding enemies damage the grid, potentially hemming you in. Watch out for the eye-searing backgrounds on the C64 though.



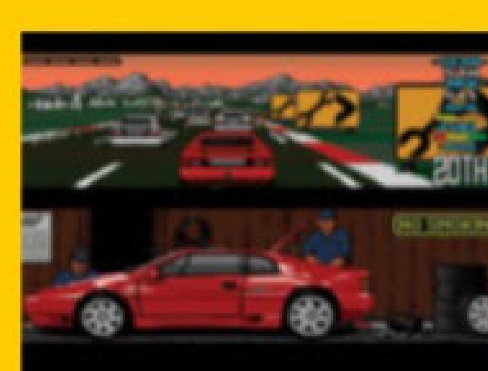
KIKSTART II

■ The pinnacle of the *Kikstart* series, which by this point had actually spawned an oddball C16 survival game and a C128 semi-sequel. This release honed the controls, added a much needed on-screen speedometer, and gave you a construction kit – all for three quid.



COSMIC CAUSEWAY

■ *Trailblazer*'s underrated sequel has plenty going for it. Very much inspired by *Space Harrier*, the visuals are bolder and the courses are more complex. Power-ups and multiple pathways add depth to the title, but it retains the pace of its predecessor.



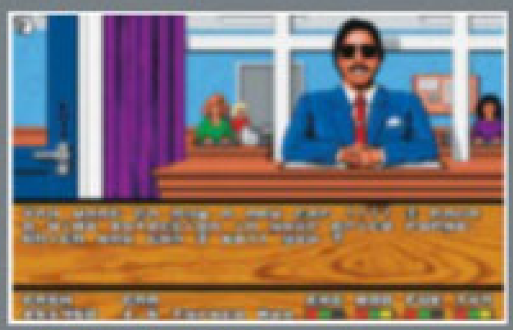
LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE

■ Having tested the waters with *Super Cars*, *Lotus* was Shaun's first crack at something utilising the Amiga's technical clout. The resulting split-screen racer is thrilling and addictive, and still holds up well today.



LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO CHALLENGE 2

■ Closer to a straight arcade racer than its predecessor (and lacking a two-player mode), *Lotus 2* was influenced by *OutRun* and a desire to not "just do a rehash" of the original *Lotus*. Shaun considers this his best game.



» [Amiga] Yeah, this guy doesn't look dodgy AT ALL.



» [Amiga] Buy a car! Realise £30,000 doesn't get you very far!



» [Amiga] Front and rear missiles? That's… not very sporting.

Andrew to finish them all," says Shaun. "We also made the roads more windy and tight, along with adding obstacles such as gates and trains. Both *Super Cars* games were on the verge of being annoying at times, but when you got it right, it felt great." And then there were all the new trading components, which Shaun feels really added to the game: "Once you knew what a good price for each item was, you knew when to stock up and when to sell. Of course, prices fluctuated, so you'd sometimes be planning to sell or upgrade your car and find you couldn't. But when you made a killing, it felt really good!"

Perhaps the biggest shift from the original, though, was a greater emphasis on weapons. Although the first game had enabled you to hobble opponents via a missile, *Super Cars 2* ramped up your arsenal considerably, enabling you to kit out your vehicles with homing missiles, rotating 'super missiles', landmines and battering rams. "Well, with any sequel, you either do everything the same, or since you know people like the game, you push it a little bit," mulls Shaun on the impact of the extra weapons. "I think we weren't afraid to change things, and the new weapons were intended to give *Super Cars 2* an added dimension. I'm not sure how much we experimented with them, but the weapons certainly broke up play!"

Shaun does admit, though, that the updated firepower wasn't always a good thing and could instead cause problems for the players: "You'd sometimes have two players constantly trying to blow each-other up, rather than race. But in our games, you'd only both progress if one of you finished in a high enough position. A good bout of blowing each other up could see you both knocked out!" He adds that the landmines were particularly bad, since if someone dropped one right in front of you, you'd be unable to avoid it, but that also forced you to strategise, based around what your opponent had fitted.



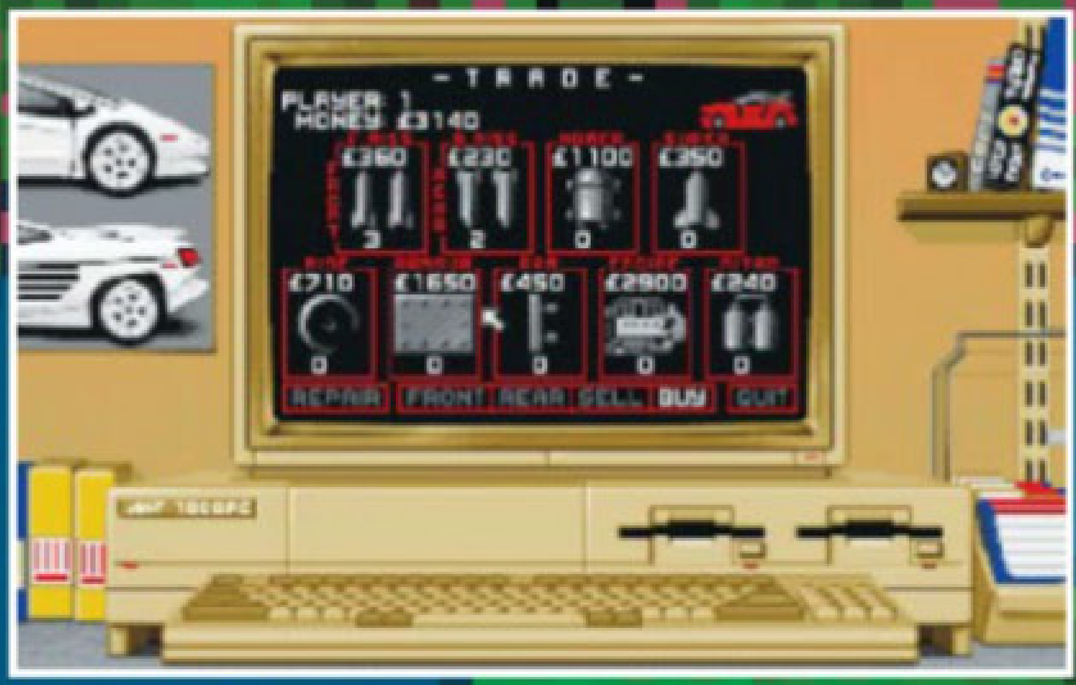
» [Amiga] Two-player games: get your memory hat on, or you'll forever smack into walls.

Like its predecessor, *Super Cars* was broadly well received, but that was the end of the series, and Shaun doesn't remember if there were ever plans to do another: "I'm not sure what we might have put in a future version, but it never happened. By that point, we were working on a new *Lotus* game instead."

Shaun continued working on high-octane racers, notably well-received rally games. But if there's any intention of returning to his roots, he's not telling; instead, his latest creation riffs off of a newer craze: "A friend and I recently did an iPhone game – just a small, infuriating thing that you can check out via eggbound.com. We like to think it's the thinking-man's *Flappy Bird*… Maybe!" ★



» [Amiga] Dear Health & Safety: Are you SURE you checked out this track fully?



» [Amiga] Buy! Sell! Admire the very beige desktop hardware!



» [Amiga] Missiles everywhere. Probably to be introduced to F1 any day now…

DESERT • ISLAND • DISKS

Karl Hörnell

What cherished games would you take to the island?

While still at school, Karl Hörnell produced a diverse bunch of titles for Interceptor Micros' budget label, Players. Paul Drury wants to know the name of the games…

As this is the first time we've marooned a Scandinavian on our digital desert island, we're keen to get his perspective on that most enduring of retro squabbles: were Swedish playgrounds divided along Commodore and Sinclair lines just as they were in Britain?

"The Commodore was dominant but yes, I knew people who had Spectrums," explains Karl in impeccably clipped English. "We called that computer 'the eraser' because of its keyboard."

It seems that jibes at the Speccy's zombie-fleshed keys were indeed an international phenomenon in the early Eighties. Growing up in the historic city of Uppsala, Sweden, Karl's first glimpse of videogames was on his neighbour's Atari VCS in 1982, quickly followed by the arrival of a VIC-20 into the homes of two of his lucky classmates. Discovering you could actually type in programmes to tinker and experiment with on Commodore's micro, he knew he needed his own machine. He talked his parents into buying him one and soon his dad returned home with a beautiful beige VIC 64. That's not a typo – the Commodore 64 was initially known as the VIC 64 in Sweden to capitalise on the popularity of its predecessor over there.

"At first I was disappointed," he admits. "I had expected something compatible with my friends' computers. Then he told me the salesperson had called this 'the computer of the future'. Better graphics. Better sound. More memory. And he was right."

It was certainly to be the computer of Karl's future. The lack of available games for the new machine was initially frustrating but actually acted as a catalyst for him to write his own. Not content with simply producing his own clones of *Q*Bert*, *Chopper Command* and the like, he went as far as creating charming hand-drawn cassette covers for his fantasy software house, Center Soft. At age 14, he enthusiastically entered a software competition in Swedish magazine *VIC-Rapport* and bizarrely bagged both first and second prize (see boxout 'The Winner Takes It All'). Spurred on by this unexpected triumph, Karl plucked up courage and sent some of his efforts across the water to Interceptor Micros, based in rural Hampshire, England.

"Their games had some personality," says Karl with admiration. "You could feel the presence of the developer. The most blatant example was *Get Off My Garden* by Ian Gray. It had a long monologue running across the screen while you played. I thought that was fascinating. You could put your own thoughts into a game and these people weren't afraid to do it. That made them feel more real than the other companies and made it easier to make contact with them."

Karl was essentially looking for some feedback from a professional software outfit, perhaps some gentle encouragement that this plucky Swedish schoolboy was doing his best. What he wasn't expecting was to get his games published. Yet his timing was fortuitous; Interceptor was planning to launch its own budget range and Karl's diverse bunch of games fitted nicely with its vision for the new Players label. Four of his early speculative submissions ended up being released in late 1985 and early 1986, beginning with *Fruity*, which involved bouncing an intrepid trampolinist into fruit-laden trees whilst avoiding a ravenous parrot. Ronald Rubberduck, released shortly afterwards, had a similarly off-beat theme, as you guided your bath toy through dangerous waters, avoiding mutant frogs and electrified mazes. Karl, you must have been delighted to see your own creations being sold as commercial releases?

"It was a mixture of pride and terror," he tells us, noticeably sheepishin his response. "I didn't think those games were ready for the market."

Clearly Karl was unfamiliar with the generic dross that often qualified for a budget release (*Bionic Granny*, anyone?), for what his early games lacked in polish, they made up for in character. His third release, *Velocipede*, may have been a simple skit on *Moon Patrol*, but the way your turtle-necked hero assembled his bike before peddling past pyramids and grazing sheep (no prizes for guessing Jeff Minter's work was an influence) was a sweet touch, as was the inclusion of fluttering Swedish flags in the background. "It was a way of

Trivia

Karl's abiding love of cartooning can be seen in *Savage Dragonbert: Full Frontal Nerdity*, his mash-up of *Dilbert* and the *Savage Dragon* comics, published in 2002.

Aged 14, Karl was not only coding arcade clones, he was even mocking up cassette inlays for his imaginary software house.





“I think a part of me will always be stuck in the Eighties”

Karl Hörnell

FIRST JOB
Freelance games programmer

CURRENT JOB
Senior developer

FAVOURITE FILM
Avengers Assemble

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Sorry to disappoint you but I don't listen to music

FAVOURITE BOOK:
Best Software Guide: VIC-20 And Commodore 64 Games by Tony Takoushi. It provided me with a lot of information and inspiration

FIRST COMPUTER/CONSOLE
Parachute (Game & Watch)

FAVOURITE COMPUTER/CONSOLE
iPhone

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
Developing my online poker game

BEST-SELLING PRODUCT:
IceBlox Plus

BEST HOLIDAY
Visiting Interceptor Software in England in 1986

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
Jimmy Carr. I'd like to know what's going on in his head.

145235-46748577546542



SEX
M

NAME
Karl Hörnell

DATE OF BIRTH
26.4.1970

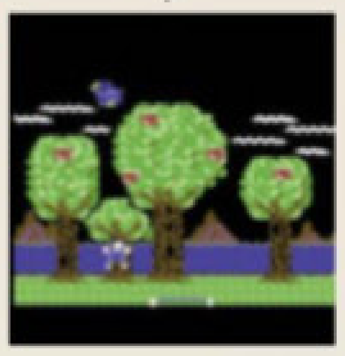
PLACE OF BIRTH
Uppsala, Sweden

BIOGRAPHY
As a schoolboy, Karl was inspired by the emerging C64 software development scene in England and sent over his early coding efforts to Interceptor Micros. The company ended up publishing nine of his games, including Fungus and Clean Up Service.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Timeline

FRUITY
■ **YEAR:** 1985
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Karl's first published game was a pastiche of Exidy's old arcade game *Circus*, with a dash of strategy as you varied the height of your fruit-gobbler.



VELOCIPEDE 2
■ **YEAR:** 1986
■ **FORMAT:** C64
The peddler of the original got off his bike and hopped onto a unicycle for this sequel. Try and spot the nods to Karl's favourite UK developers en route.



FUNGUS
■ **YEAR:** 1986
■ **FORMAT:** C64
A simple idea, executed well, that has you somersaulting over gaps trying to collect mushrooms as the screen scrolls inexorably onward.



TOADFORCE
■ **YEAR:** 1986
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Inspired by a mechanical toad he drew for *C&VG*, this sees Karl having a shot at the shoot-'em-up, mixing *Dropzone* and *Fort Apocalypse*.



» Karl's original drawing for the *C&VG* art competition that would inspire *Toadforce*.





[C64] *Clean Up Service* was Karl's final release for his beloved C64 and arguably his best.

Praise for Karl

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Karl Hörnell's games...





Darran Jones
I didn't own a C64 back in the day, so Karl's releases originally passed me by. Looking back at his games retrospectively it's clear to see that *Clean Up Service* is a damn fine game that has stood the test of time well. It's graphically impressive and boasts some really solid gameplay mechanics.





Paul Drury
Karl's C64 games may not be familiar names but revisiting them after almost three decades, you're struck by their character and sense of fun. His willingness to experiment with genres is admirable and when it comes to online poker, he certainly played his cards right. Plus his English is better than mine.

letting the world know there were programmers from other countries out there," he smiles.

Karl's opening quartet of releases was completed by *Clean Up Time*. Inspired by the teamwork of Taskset's *Super Pipeline 2*, the game tasked a hapless pair of broom-wielding labourers with clearing up various baddie-filled stages and offered some innovative co-op play. It's an interesting and forward-thinking game, though in common with all of Karl's early releases, it remains a stern challenge.

"I had played my games so much while developing them, I had lost touch with how difficult they were," says Karl. "I had become so accustomed to the controls and ended up making more and more difficult levels. You lose your objectivity when you're playing and developing at the same time."

Karl may have lacked impartial playtesters to point out any painful difficulty spikes, but he did have a small team of collaborators. His classmates F Wootz and B Eklund would help with the gruelling task of typing in reams of hexadecimal, as Karl's incredibly primitive machine code monitor meant he would painstakingly write out his code on paper first, and school friend J Vessby provided music for several of his titles. We wondered whether the isolation of Karl and his little gang might even have helped when it came to coming up with original game concepts?

"Not with original ideas but definitely weird ideas," decides Karl. "I wasn't getting any feedback from other developers."

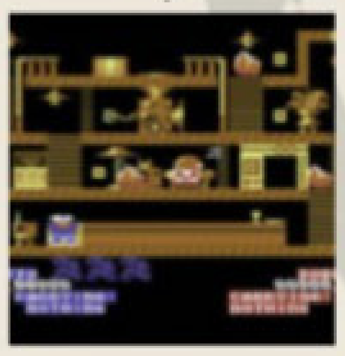
Crafting his titles far away from the vibrant British software scene of the mid-Eighties seems to have encouraged Karl to create his own distinct visual style, with cartoon characterisation and little comic cutscenes punctuating his games. His relationship with Interceptor seems strangely distant in these early days too. After being paid £250 for each of his first four releases ("There was no negotiation," he adds, "they made me an offer and I accepted.") Karl explains he was given free rein to develop whatever games he wished, simply sending away the finished code and receiving occasional polite letters from Simon Daniels, Interceptor's 'software coordinator', accompanying a cheque for purchasing the title outright. "I always expected my games not to sell so a fixed payment was better than royalties," Karl quips, modestly.

However, now he knew his efforts were destined for commercial release, he consciously upped his game. Deciding to revisit *Velocipede*, the sequel added smoother scrolling and shorter, snappier courses, full of dastardly obstacles and clever little details, but oddly lost one of the original's wheels. "I should have called it *Velocipede.5*," he adds dryly. "It was a little ironic I suppose but going from a bike to a unicycle meant I used one sprite not two for the velocipede so that left me more to use for enemies. I wasn't entirely happy with the game but it was clearly an improvement."

Talking to Karl, you sense he was his own harshest critic, constantly noting the limitations in his coding ability, so it's a pleasant surprise to hear him speak so fondly of his next title. Developed over the summer of 1986, *Fungus* was the tale of a portly, mushroom-loving glutton (no relation to Raymond

1987 | 1990 | 2002 | 2014

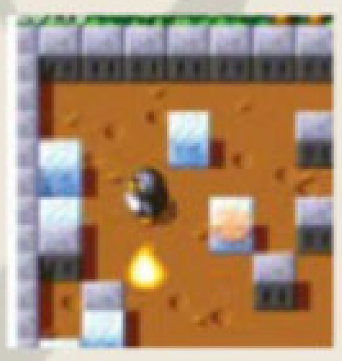
CLEAN UP SERVICE
■ **YEAR:** 1987
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Our personal favourite of Karl's back-catalogue, this platform-based clean-'em-up featured two-player co-op action and much frenzied broom work.



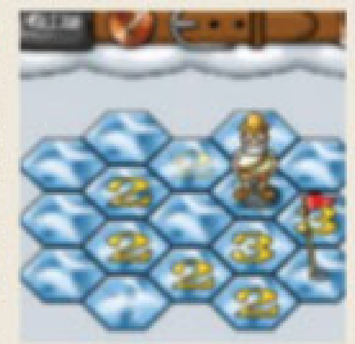
FUNGUS 2
■ **YEAR:** 1990
■ **FORMAT:** C64
Thanks to the work of Frank Gasking at www.gtw64.co.uk you can now see what the mushroom lover did next in this previously unreleased sequel.



ICEBLOX PLUS
■ **YEAR:** 2002
■ **FORMAT:** Mobile
One of Karl's Java games from the Nineties and beyond, this *Pengo* pastiche features Pete the Penguin pushing through the snowy wastes.



PERMUTO
■ **YEAR:** 2014
■ **FORMAT:** iOS
Karl's current project is due this year. "The last time a magazine featured an unfinished game of mine was *Fungus 2*, so I hope this doesn't jinx it," he notes.



The Winner Takes It All

These days, Sweden is the proud home of many leading games developers, but according to Karl, things were a little different in the Eighties. "In the summer of 1984, Sweden's only magazine for Commodore users, *VIC-Rapport*, announced a programming competition," he recalls. "To hedge my bets, I sent in three entries: some kind of cross between *Manic Miner* and *Donkey Kong* and a couple of two-player gunfight duel games. In what felt like a completely absurd outcome, I won both first and second prize. Third price went to someone's page-and-a-half BASIC implementation of *Snake*. It was like entering a marathon slightly out of shape and then winning because all the other contestants were just walking. It took some of the triumph out of it. I was suddenly hailed as the leading hobbyist game developer in my country. The article ended with, 'The world is waiting for Karl Hörnell'!"

[C64] Brooms at the ready, boys…



Brigg's bogeyman, Karl assures us), who must somersault his way through a constantly scrolling course, dodging angry birds and annoyed insects on the way. "For some reason, I've always found mushrooms to be kind of cool," he muses. "I'd figured out a cheap way to give the illusion of 3D by checking which type of characters the feet of the player sprite touched and once I got the hang of that extra dimension, classical 2D scrollers felt so primitive."

Perhaps sensing they had a hit on their hands, Julian and Richard Jones, the father and son founders of Interceptor, invited Karl and his parents over during the school holidays so he could add the finishing touches to *Fungus* in England. "I was overwhelmed when I got there," he admits. "My parents did most of the talking. I was constantly nervous. Meeting Simon Daniels and the Joneses was a bit intimidating. I couldn't really connect with them because they were so far above me. In every respect. We had dinner with them and I sat quietly the whole evening. I just couldn't think of anything meaningful to say that they would appreciate, anything interesting enough that they'd want to hear."

We like to think Karl let his programming do the talking and indeed *Fungus*, which could be the great-granddaddy of iOS hit *Temple Run* and has aged rather gracefully, caught the attention of the British press. Issue 63 of *Computer And Video Games* magazine features a three-page spread on the game, including a map and mini-interview with Karl. It wasn't the first time his work had graced the pages of *C&VG*, either. The previous issue had featured his winning entry to one of its regular art competitions, which had asked readers to design their own Zoid, the toy robot craze from Japan that had invaded UK toy shops in the mid-Eighties. Karl's drawing of an elaborate mechanical toad not only bagged him a prize, but inspired his next game for Interceptor. *Toadforce*, released right at the end of 1986, saw Karl blasting new ground as his heavily-armed amphibian infiltrated an underground base, swarming with alien adversaries. "I hadn't really done a space shoot-'em-up before," he explains. "I wanted to do something different, something more technological and less cartoony."

Karl's eagerness to explore different game styles led him to code multi-screen arcade adventure *Melonmania* next, his only game to gain a full-price Interceptor release



» The Commodore 64 was initially known as the VIC 64 in Sweden to capitalise on the success of its predecessor.



» Karl's cover art and sprite sketches for *Melonmania*.

> "A salesperson told my father the Commodore 64 was 'the computer of the future'. He was right"

The future proved very bright for Mr Hörnell's boy…

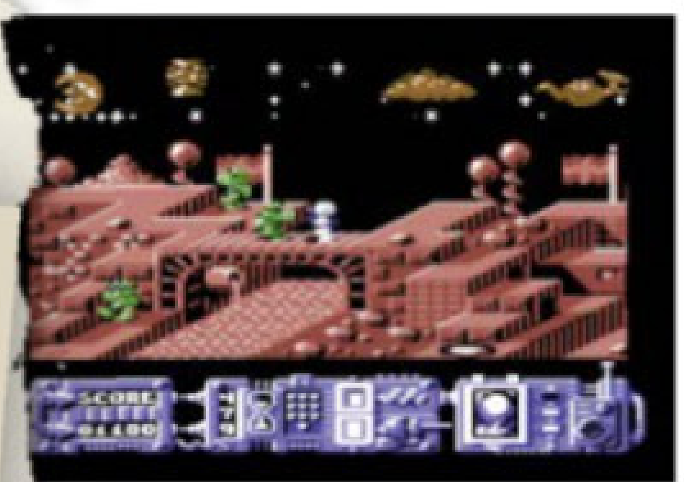


Hörnell on Hörnell

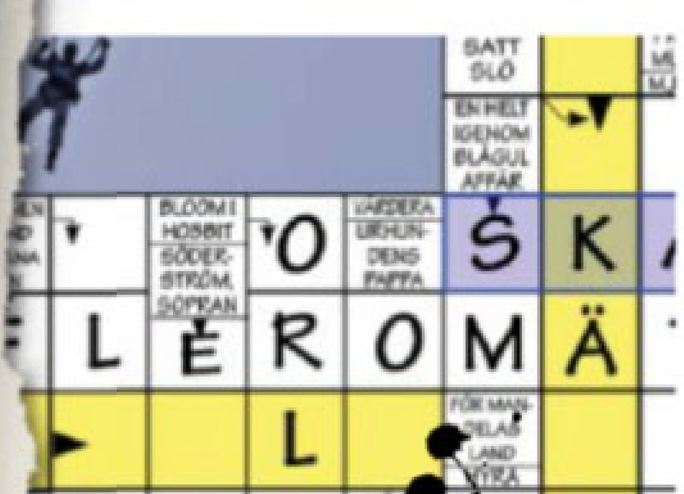
Karl picks his three favourite projects



■ POKERROOM ONLINE POKER
It built an empire, so to speak. I was the only programmer so I had to do all of its parts including the graphics and some of the web design. It was challenging but also rewarding when people started playing it. Then thousands were playing it.



■ FUNGUS 2
That was the first time where I felt I didn't hold back on anything. I did the best I could for everything in it. The design, the music… I really gave it my best shot. It was something I could be proud of and not look back at with embarrassment.



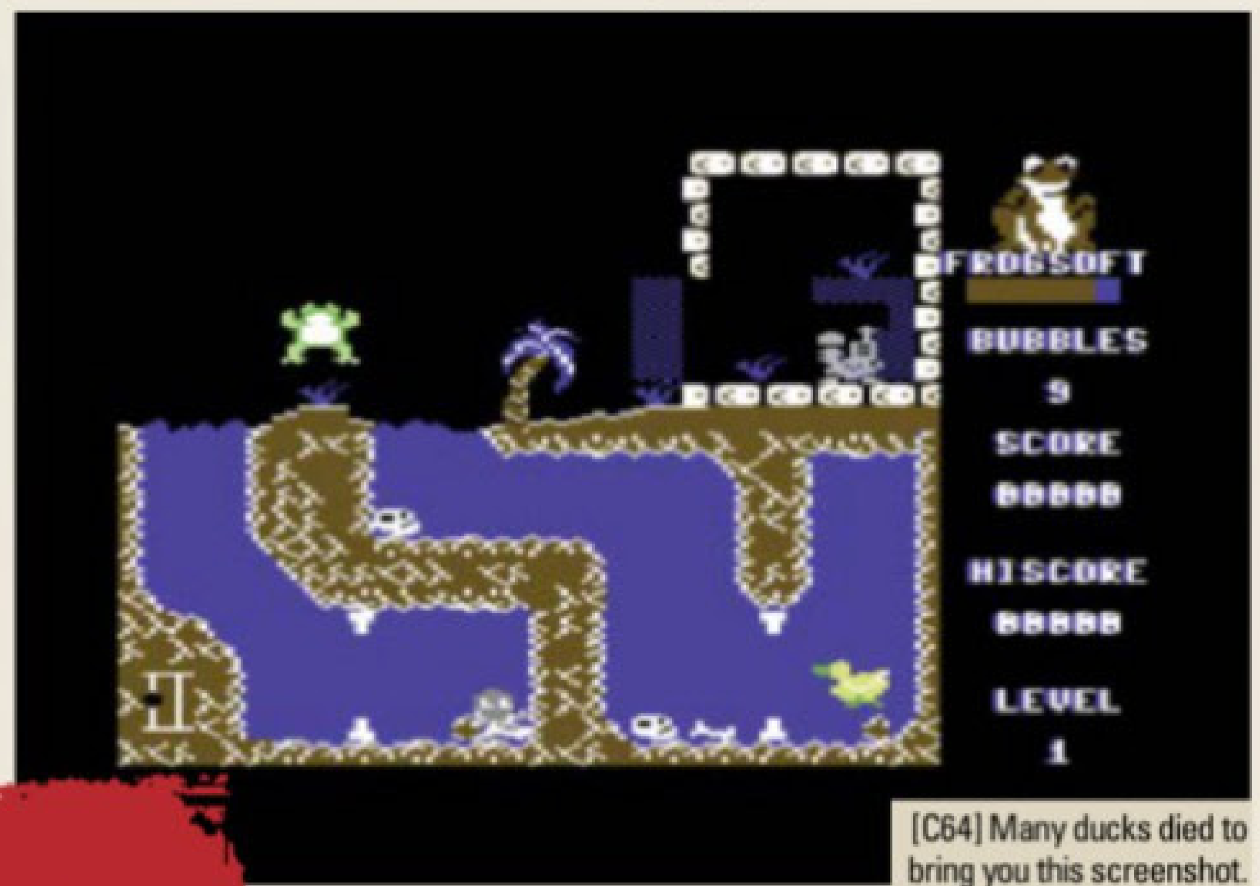
■ SVD KORSORD
I developed it for a Swedish newspaper, making Swedish-style crosswords available on mobile phones. It's been very well received. Even people who aren't very technical can use it and enjoy it.



[C64] *Melonmania* was promoted to a full-price Interceptor release.



[C64] *Velocipede* was Karl's third game for Interceptor's budget label, Players, and shows his love of cartoon characterisation and rock-hard gameplay…



[C64] Many ducks died to bring you this screenshot.

Readers' Questions

Mayhem: Were the characters in *Clean Up Time* and *Clean Up Service* inspired by anyone in real life?
Yes, definitely. My friend Eklund and I used to draw comics together just for fun. We had two characters Otto and Bobban and they were kind of based on us. It had a lot of toilet humour so when I needed some characters for the *Clean Up* games, I naturally picked those, as they were established in my mind.

Markopoloman: Would you ever consider making another C64 game? One that could be released on one of the current software labels?
Yes, I have a former colleague that has released a new game for the C64 like that. If I had time, I might. It would be some kind of 3D version of *Pengo*, I think.

Merman: Did you re-use a lot of code between games?
The only piece of code I re-used was the one for making music. I had almost the same code in *Toadforce* as in *Fungus 2*. For everything else, I started from scratch for every game.

Fgasking: Have you worked on any other unreleased games?
There are dozens from the days before Players but there are a few from the time between *Clean Up Service* and *Fungus 2*. One was *Clod Jumper*. It had a guy who could step inside a robot suit, but wouldn't be very mobile so had to leave the suit to negotiate ladders and the like. I was going to enter it in a competition in *C&VG* to win £10,000 but the deadline ran out. I also had the idea of submitting a game to *Commodore User* that they could distribute with the magazine. It would be a *Super Pipeline* clone but instead of oil there would be fruits travelling along a conveyor belt towards a juice machine and I'd call it… *Commodore Juicer*!

(earning him £350, a slight pay rise) before revisiting his own unique genre, the two-player brush-'em-up, with *Clean Up Service*. Released in 1987, it's arguably his finest work, full of ingenious touches and oozing personality, and is testament to how far his programming skills had developed in a few short years. With a new found confidence, Karl began work on what he hoped would be his magnum opus. The sequel to *Fungus*, his best received C64 title, would feature full 3D, multi-directional scrolling and expansive environments, teeming with beautifully animated aliens.

"*Fungus 2* would blow everything else out of the water," he sighs. "Unfortunately, I started this project at a time when I needed to focus more on my studies. I could rarely afford to spend more than a few hours a week on the game, the complexity of which grew to monstrous proportions. After a year I still hadn't finished it, but at that point my C64 wasn't in very good shape. The space bar and the RUN/STOP key barely worked anymore. The computer would also sometimes shut down inexplicably, causing me to lose a lot of work. I never knew when a crash was due to my program or my dying hardware. I felt I was going insane trying to track down the remaining bugs…"

We interrupt Karl to ask a rather obvious question. As a prolific coder with nine published titles to his name, surely he could just pop out and buy a brand new Commodore 64 with the proceeds from his work?

"I have to give you an honest answer,' he replies. "I'm a cheap bastard. The money from the game wouldn't have paid for a new computer. It wouldn't have made financial sense at that time."

And it seems it didn't make financial sense to Interceptor, either. When Karl finally submitted a 99 per cent complete version of *Fungus 2* in 1990, its Players label had been discontinued and it explained it now only released new games across multiple platforms. Karl had been working on a scaled-back version of the game for the Atari ST, having been given one by Richard Jones, but admits he struggled to get to grips with the 16-bit machine. "It was horrible. The machine language was completely different and I didn't know anything about how to program it. I much preferred the C64. I knew how it worked and could make it do whatever I wanted but the ST was like a black box to me. I didn't have enough spare time to finish that project, so that was the end of it. I let the opportunity slide out of my hands."

Trivia

As well as coding the game, Karl provided the cover art for his 1986 release *Fungus*. The January 1987 issue of *C&VG* includes a guide to the game.

It seems a sad and abrupt end to a promising coding career and we can't help thinking if he'd just had enough money to replace his ageing C64 and Interceptor had been a little more supportive or generous with its payments, things could've worked out very differently. Instead, Karl headed off to study engineering at university, his finest work left unpublished and his brief time as a videogames programmer apparently consigned to his childhood. He did return to games coding again in the Nineties, producing some sweet Java homages to his C64 days, and at the start of the new millennium, he created one of the earliest online poker games, handling all the coding and graphics himself. His timing was impeccable. Internet gambling exploded and suddenly this little Swedish company largely owned by the Hörnell family was in demand by some of the major global players.

"We sold it for a little over £400 million," says Karl, offhandedly. "We had some investors but my family owned about half of the company. My share of the sale price was 12.3 per cent"

That's a lot of money. Suffice to say, since the sale in 2004, Karl hasn't had to work to pay his mortgage off but he still chooses to, producing a bunch of iOS games ranging from word games to slick *Pipe Mania* clones. We wonder whether he still feels like that young bedroom coder, bashing out C64 titles after school. "Sometimes," he says, wistfully. "I still remember how I felt during those times. It was a wonderful feeling. I've been trying to get it back. Sometimes I sense it again for a moment but not so much these days. I think a part of me will always be stuck in the Eighties."

You can find Karl's iOS games on iTunes under the name Eweguo AB and see some of his old work at www.javaonthebrain.com.

Thanks to Vinny at www.hackersoft.co.uk and www.c64endings.co.uk for the introduction and the always helpful Martyn Carroll.

Karl Hörnell

Desert Island Disks

The games that Karl Hörnell just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01 Dig Dug (C64)
It's such a weird, strange idea for a game. Digging around in the ground and pumping things up until they explode. It doesn't make sense but works in its own context.

02 Paradroid (C64)
Another game that I've recreated. It's a great game. The combination of puzzle and adventure and action makes it very interesting. You don't get tired of it. And of course all those amazing robot designs.

03 Nebulus (C64)
I don't really like playing this but I can watch it for hours. I've seen the Atari ST version but I think that's over-rendered, not as easy on the eyes.

04 Cauldron (C64)
Another one I like watching more than playing. It's beautifully animated. Every detail works, down to the smoke that rises from the chimneys. Everything is just so good looking. The music, the atmosphere… it's perfect.

05 Super Pipeline 2 (C64)
I have to take something from Taskset. This is an old favourite that has to go on this list. It showed me it was okay to put big noses on game characters.

06 Pooyan (C64)
Another game I've played a lot for the same reasons as *Dig Dug*. It was such an original idea – weird but it still worked. It looked like nothing else and that impresses me. Sometimes people do that and it's interesting but not very fun to play. This was both.

07 Fort Apocalypse (C64)
An oldie which I'm taking for the atmosphere. It was challenging but it is possible to beat it if you just focus. I have many fond memories of playing it on rainy summer days.

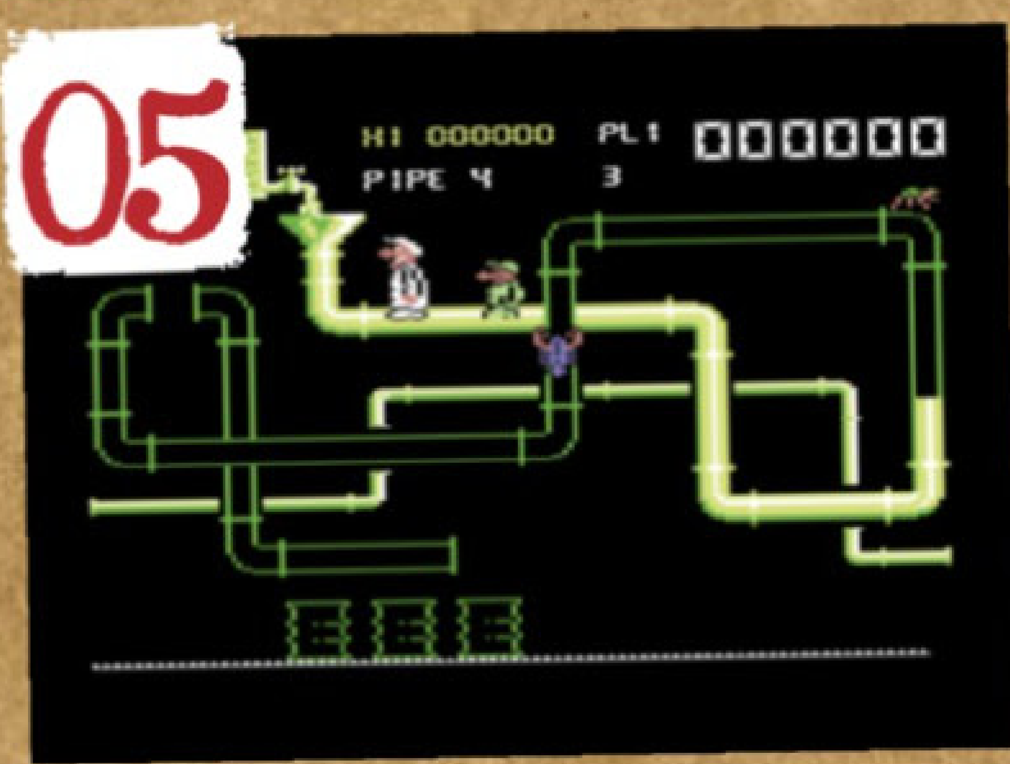
08 Get Off My Garden (C64)
This was the first game I bought with my own money. It was the first Interceptor game I owned and the game that introduced me to them. It showed me that what happens in a game doesn't always have to make sense as long as it's interesting and kind of cool.

01


02


03


04


05


06


07


08


Putt & Putter

TRIPLE BOGEY

» RETROREVIVAL



» Master System » SIMS » 1992

As a collector, I've always felt that the ability to play the game is the most important thing about owning it – having a copy in good condition is desirable but never essential. With that philosophy in mind, I picked up a copy of *Putt & Putter* that looked like it had been attacked by a particularly angry dog back in 2006. It was tattered and torn, but recognisable as the game I'd seen in the magazines of my youth. More importantly, it only cost me 25p.

As it turned out, that poor condition was a blessing. The miniature golf that *Putt & Putter* offers is well-constructed, but the course design provides a steep learning curve for new players. Apart from simple slopes and rough patches, you'll need to contend with obstacles including switches, bumpers, barriers and portals. The difficulty ramps up quickly after a couple of gentle opening stages, particularly when multiple portals are thrown into the mix with no indication of which entrances and exits are connected.

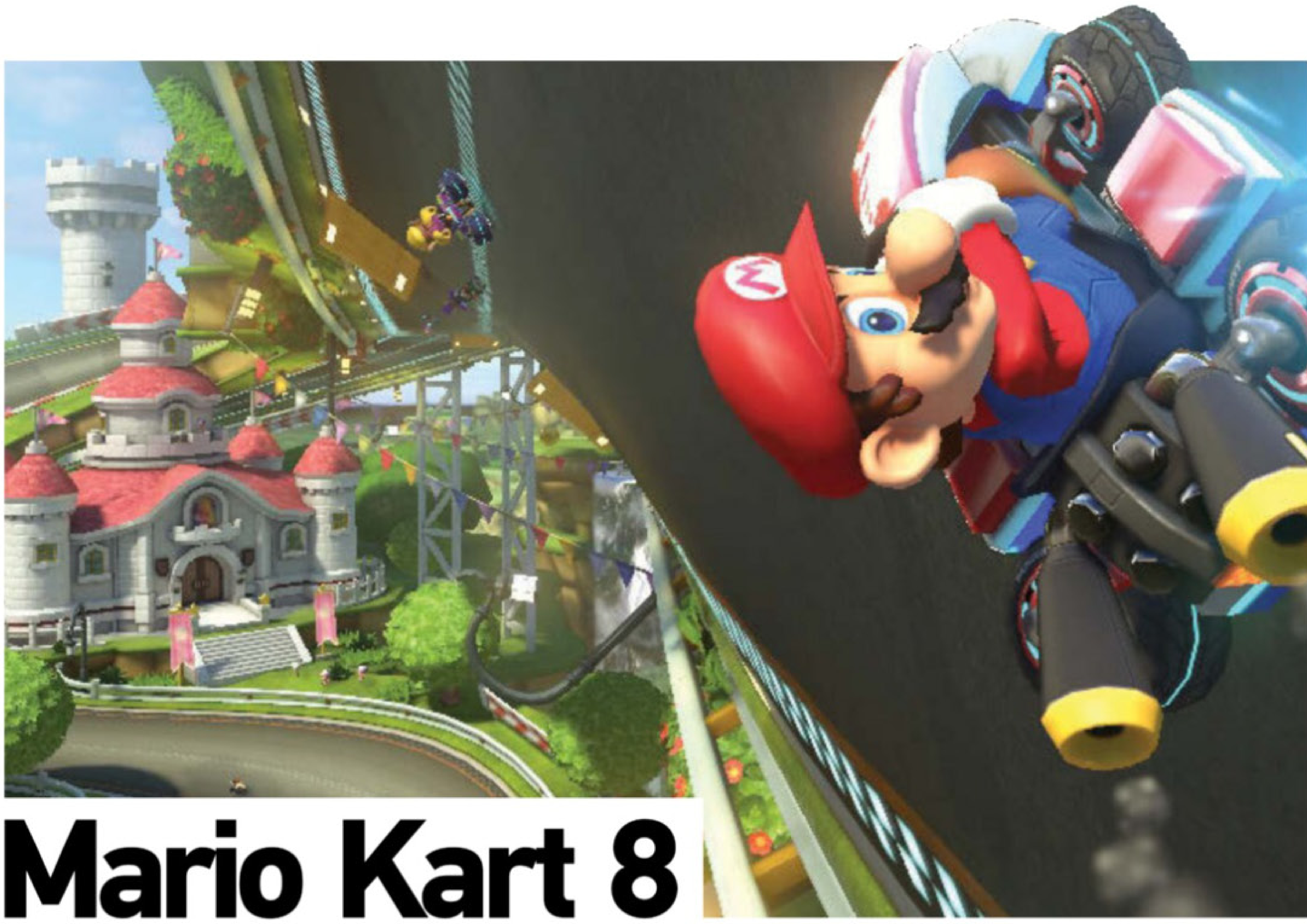
To make matters worse, while it's possible to gain extra lives for coming in under par, the game docks them for going over par – one for each shot over! Thankfully, the bonus stage that appears after the sixth and 12th holes provides welcome respite and extra lives. If it weren't for that small relief, my walls would have been a mess – if I could have ever felt comfortable chucking a game at the wall after a particularly frustrating session, my battered copy of *Putt & Putter* would surely have been it. *


OUT

RETRORATED



>> Nintendo's premium racer returns, and splices in F-Zero anti-grav sections to its tried and tested racing. We also look at the latest addition to the Harvest Moon franchise and see how the Vita ports of God Of War and Sly Racoon stack up



Mario Kart 8

WILL NINTENDO'S LATEST GAME TRANSFORM YOUR OPINION OF THE KART GENRE?

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** WII U
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £49.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-12 (ONLINE)

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Super Mario Kart* first arrived in 1992, kick-starting the kart subgenre. It's gone on to appear on every major Nintendo console, with only the Virtua Boy not receiving a game. The series is overseen by Hideki Konno, who co-directed the SNES original.



As much as we've enjoyed Nintendo's recent big Wii U releases, many of them have a sense of over familiarity to them, a sense that the developer is just playing it safe, unwilling to pursue the same innovations that propelled it to success in the Eighties and Nineties. While *Mario Kart 8* does feel like this at times, it also has plenty of moments of the old Nintendo magic.

The biggest change to the series, the introduction of anti-gravity tracks is certainly a welcome one, adding an interesting approach to the classic *Mario Kart* format. Many levels use these sections to open up the tracks with new routes, while they can also be used to avoid incoming hazards. It's a solid dynamic that really does influence your decisions as you tear around the beautiful looking tracks. It also adds a pleasing element of tactical play. Hitting other players on these sections of the track give you a 'spin boost' that effectively lurches both of you forward for a few precious seconds. It's an interesting double-edged sword as it can effectively send you forward at an inopportune moment if it's not timed correctly.

The bikes that first appeared in the Wii version are also present and correct, and are joined by ATVs and the traditional karts that have made the series so popular. The ATVs feel predictably weighty, but the bikes feel a little too skittish at times, with boost cornering being a little trickier to master than it is on the traditional four-wheeled vehicles. Customisation continues to be a theme as well, with a large amount of unlockable bits and pieces that can be used to trick out your ride (typically rewarded for every 50 coins you earn). They feel largely cosmetic however and you rarely feel that you're getting any real benefit from equipping them.

The cosmetics continue with the large number of different



» [Wii U] *Mario Kart 8* is a stunning looking game with imaginative locations and masses of variety.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

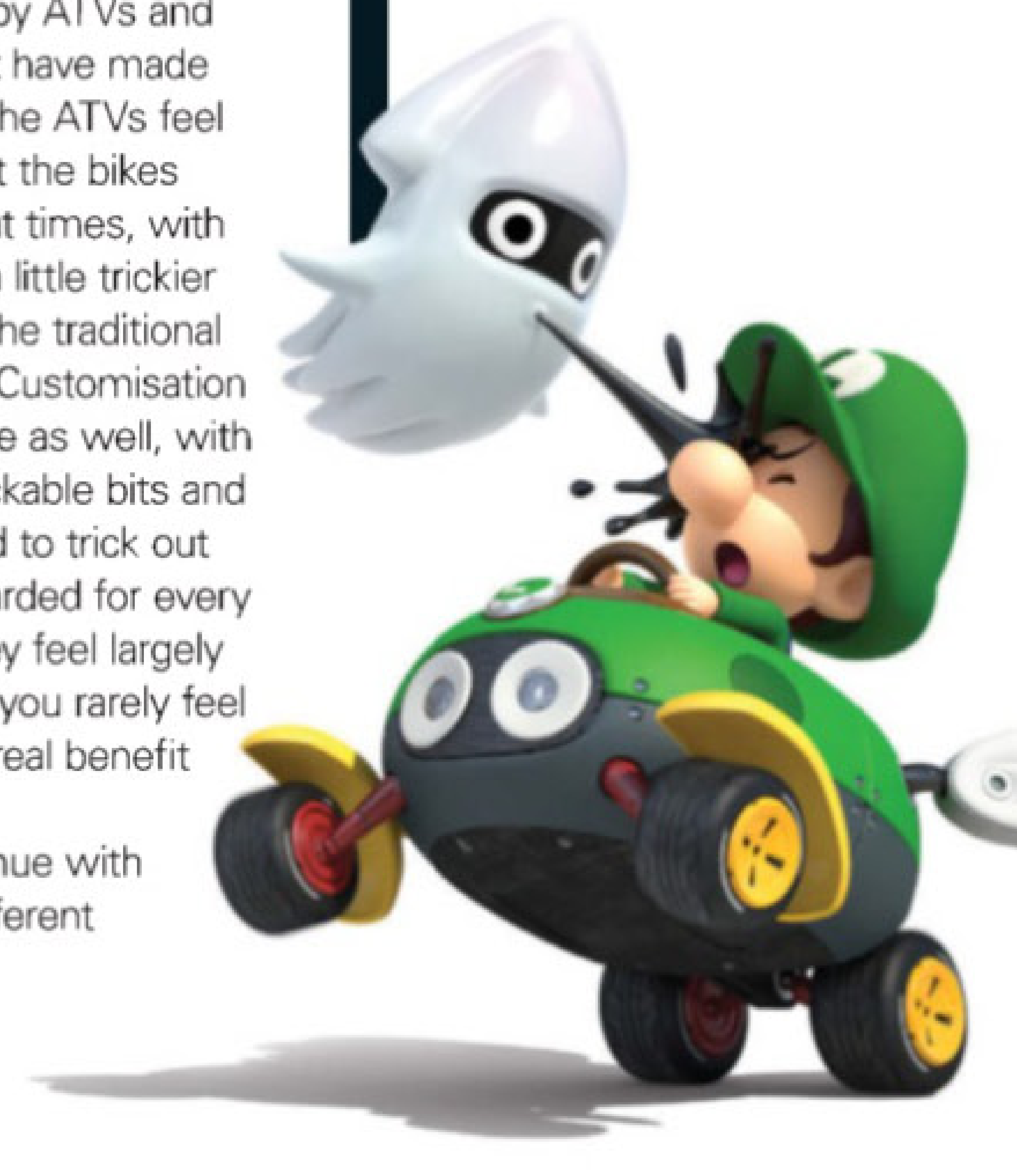
STREET RACER (MEGA DRIVE)



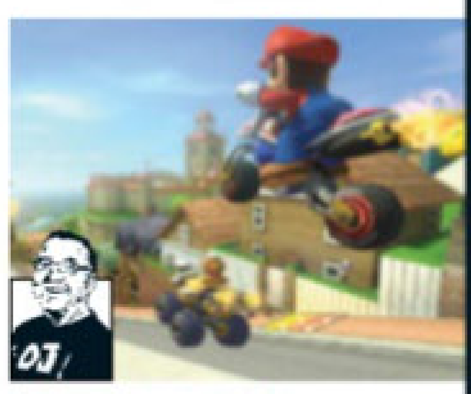
▼ SOMETHING NEW

SONIC & ALL-STARS RACING TRANSFORMED (PS3)





★ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

Mario Kart 8

It feels a little familiar, but there's no denying that this is another entertaining addition to the series.



NICK

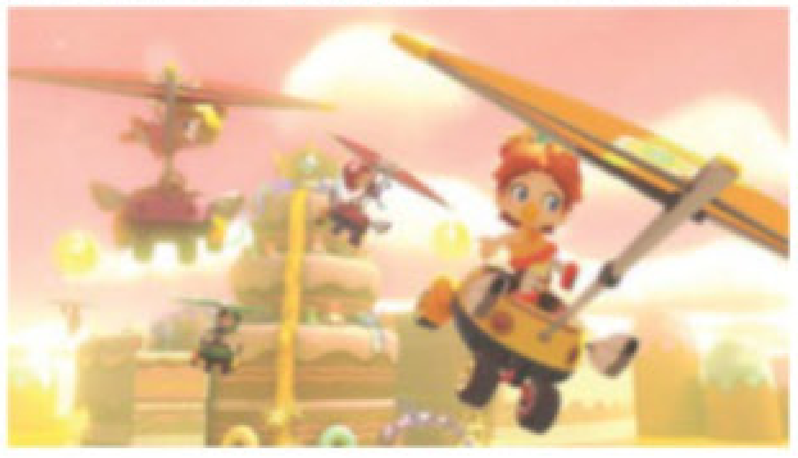
God Of War Collection

Not the best of ports, but it's still been nice to revisit the beginning of one of Sony's key franchises.



» [Wii U] We're still not big fans of the bikes, as they still feel too twitchy.

» [Wii U] Hang gliding remains an integral part of the game and has been slightly refined over *Mario Kart 7*.



» [Wii U] The anti-gravity sections are entertaining, but they work better with the new tracks.



characters that are on offer. While the roster has swollen to an impressive 30, many of them do play very similar to each other. We'd argue however that in this case it's more to do with Nintendo ensuring there's a number of popular characters spread across each class, although we can take or leave the new Koopalings if we're honest.

There are a large number of tracks to race upon as well and this is one of the areas where Nintendo's game really shines. Many of the tracks are extremely well designed, and extremely inventive in their theming. One minute you'll be hurtling along the back of a giant eel, the next you're hammering your way down a gigantic mountain or speeding along the walls of a haunted mansion. The new courses feel fresh and inventive with even Rainbow Road feeling refreshingly new, although it still lacks the wow factor of the SNES and N64 tracks (the latter of which is included). Less impressive however are the classic retro tracks that have been a mainstay of the series since *Mario Kart: Super Circuit*. They look fantastic, but the anti-gravity sections don't work quite as well as they do in the stages that were built with the feature in mind. It's a testament to Nintendo's skill that they don't feel shoehorned in, but they certainly don't feel as lovingly replicated as past retro tracks. Less impressive is the number of classic 2D tracks that feature, with just the SNES's *Donut Plains 3* and the GBA's *Mario Circuit* making the cut. While this makes sense from a technical point of view, it feels like the fan service is lacking. The sheer care and attention found in *All-Stars Racing Transformed* is completely absent here, another reason why Sumo's game still feels like the better racer.

While the single-player modes are enjoyable, it's the multiplayer that will hold most people's attention. As always they're a riot, mainly thanks to the introduction of four new items that greatly shake up the usual cocktail of coins, mushrooms and shells. The Piranha Plant chomps any nearby racers, rewarding you with a tiny burst of speed, Boomerang Flowers scythe out in a sneaky arc, while the Super Horn creates a shockwave that not only affects nearby racers, but can also stop those dreaded blue shells. The new items are rounded off by the rarely seen, but insanely powerful Crazy 8, which generates eight power-ups for you to fire off against unsuspecting foes. A number of different modes are included, but the Battle Mode disappoints, removing the arenas of past games and simply featuring normal tracks from the main game where you desperately try to hang onto your three balloons. There's a big social aspect to *Mario Kart 8*, including Miiverse integration, Mario Kart TV and online play, but deadlines mean we've been unable to fully test them.

Mario Kart 8 certainly feels familiar, but it's also a hell of a lot of fun, and ultimately, that's really what matters. *

In a nutshell

It might not shake up the genre to any great degree, and we prefer *Transformed*'s innovative approach to track design, but it's still the king of multiplayer mayhem.

>> Score **88%**

RETRO ROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download



✱ DOWNLOAD OF THE MONTH

INFORMATION
» **System:** Xbox One (tested), Xbox 360
» **Buy it for:** £11.99
» **Buy it from:** Xbox Live



Super Time Force

***Super Time Force* is some of the most fun we've had with a videogame for quite some time.** Endlessly silly and with plenty of hilarious sight gags, the jokes come almost as fast as the over-the-top action.

Essentially, *Super Time Force* is a run-and-gun shooter, but it's one with a neat time mechanic that shakes up its traditional gameplay. Each level gives you 60 seconds with which to complete it and 30 Time Outs. The Time Outs are crucial as they allow you to rewind time to any point you want and restart with a new character. It's a neat trick, effectively doubling your firepower and allowing you to complete otherwise impossible areas. Die enough times and you'll have a small army of men and women, all doing their own thing as you fight beside them.

There's a large amount of characters to rescue, each with their own unique abilities, while the time-themed stages are full of variety, playing up to their respected time zones. While the 60 seconds time limit is tight, you can increase it by picking up the 10-second time capsules placed around each stage. Certain defeated enemies or destroyed objects will also drop Glorbs (gold diamonds) that grant additional Time Outs, while shooting sparkles massively slows down time.

Of course, one of the disadvantages of time travel is the creation of paradoxes, but developer Capybara Games even has this anomaly covered. You'll occasionally see a flickering version of a past self. Pick it up and it adds a handy shield to your current hero, making it that little bit easier to traverse the tough stages. In fact the only real downside to *Super Time Force* is that boss battles become a rather bland affair because you can simply quickly wear them down with your ever-increasing army.

Super Time Force mixes classic pixel art with inventive gameplay mechanics. The end result is a highly satisfying shooter that anyone with an Xbox console needs to investigate immediately.

86%

God Of War Collection

» **System:** PS Vita » **Buy it for:** £24.99 » **Buy it from:** Online, retail, PSN

***God Of War* may have started off on PS2, but Kratos's first adventure is pretty dated.** Its biggest issues are unfair difficulty spikes that really wreck many sections of the game. These spikes cause constant howls of frustration, with the swear count rising even higher once you get to *God Of War*'s final acts (which David Jaffe has gone on record to say were never play-tested).

The second game fares far better with more nuanced combat mechanics, fewer difficulty spikes and ridiculous set pieces that continually raise the bar and make it genuinely exciting to play. In fact it's still brilliant.

It's a pity then that the ports for both games are so bland. The frame rate is solid enough, but it lacks the polish found in Bluepoint Games's excellent PS3 ports or the *Sly Collection*. Visually it's exceedingly drab to look at, with heavily compressed cutscenes. An average port of one fantastic game and one average one.

70%

>> OTHER HIGHLIGHTS



The Sly Trilogy

» **System:** PS Vita
» **Buy it for:** £24.99
» **Buy it from:** Online, retail, PSN

Sanzaru Games's conversion is the best PS2 to Vita port we've played, with decent frame rates and visuals across all three games that really come alive on the Vita's screen. It's an interesting series to play as well, as there's a huge difference in the way each game evolves. Like *God Of War*, the first game has aged, but the second and third installments really play around with the stealth themes introduced in part one.

83%

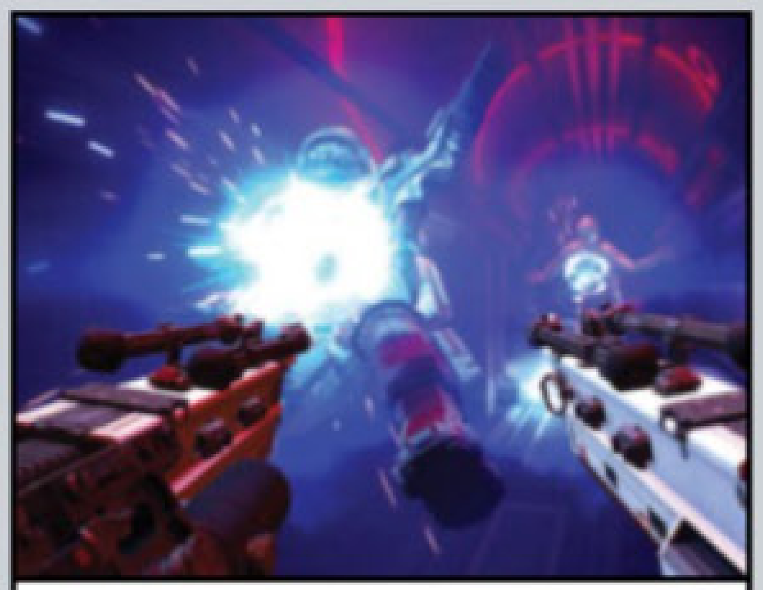


Hometown Story

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £29.99
» **Buy it from:** eShop, Retail

The latest game in the *Harvest Moon* family sees you running a shop, in addition to helping the local townspeople and attempting to find love, and the charm typical of its parent series has made it through intact. However, while building your shop can be satisfying the restocking process is laborious, and the storyline moves just a tad too slowly. *Hometown Story* sadly never quite lives up to its promise.

61%

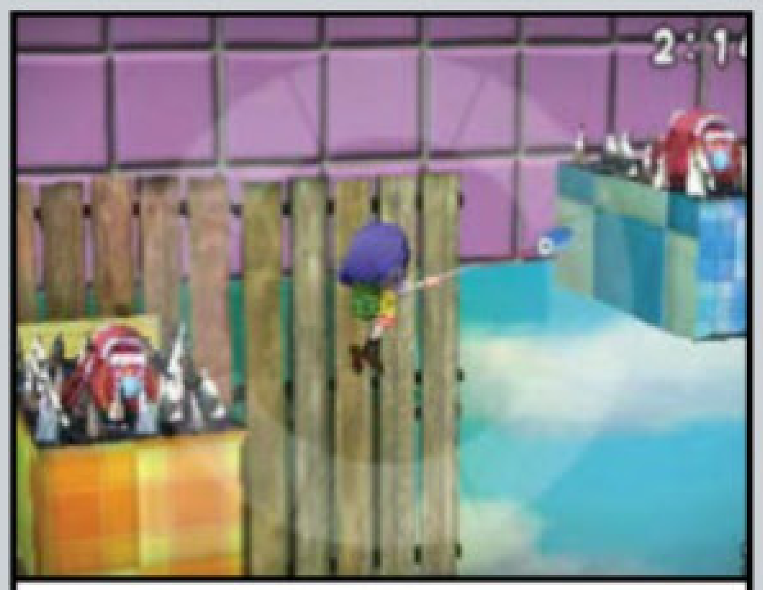


Wolfenstein: The New Order

» **System:** PS4 (tested), Xbox One, Xbox 360, PS3, PC
» **Buy it for:** £59.99
» **Buy it from:** Retail, PSN, Xbox Live

Well this is a pleasant surprise, the latest adventure of BJ Blazkowicz it brash, silly fun. Yes it doesn't feel like a next-gen game and the guns aren't as meaty as we'd like, but there's a good story at its core, while the action is fast and relentless. Smart enemies and destructible environments keep you on the move, while the Nazi/robot enemies make it feel gloriously silly and entertaining.

80%



Sayonara Umihara Kawase

» **System:** 3DS
» **Buy it for:** £19.99
» **Buy it from:** 3DS eShop

The adventures of Umihara Kawase have frustrated gamers for 20 years, and this latest outing is no different. The physics rarely behave as you'd expect, creating needless frustration as you attempt to navigate the devilishly designed stages. The attack patterns of bosses are poorly sign-posted, while the whole game is plagued by an ugly plastic look. A fiddly, frustrating experience that's as ugly as it is difficult.

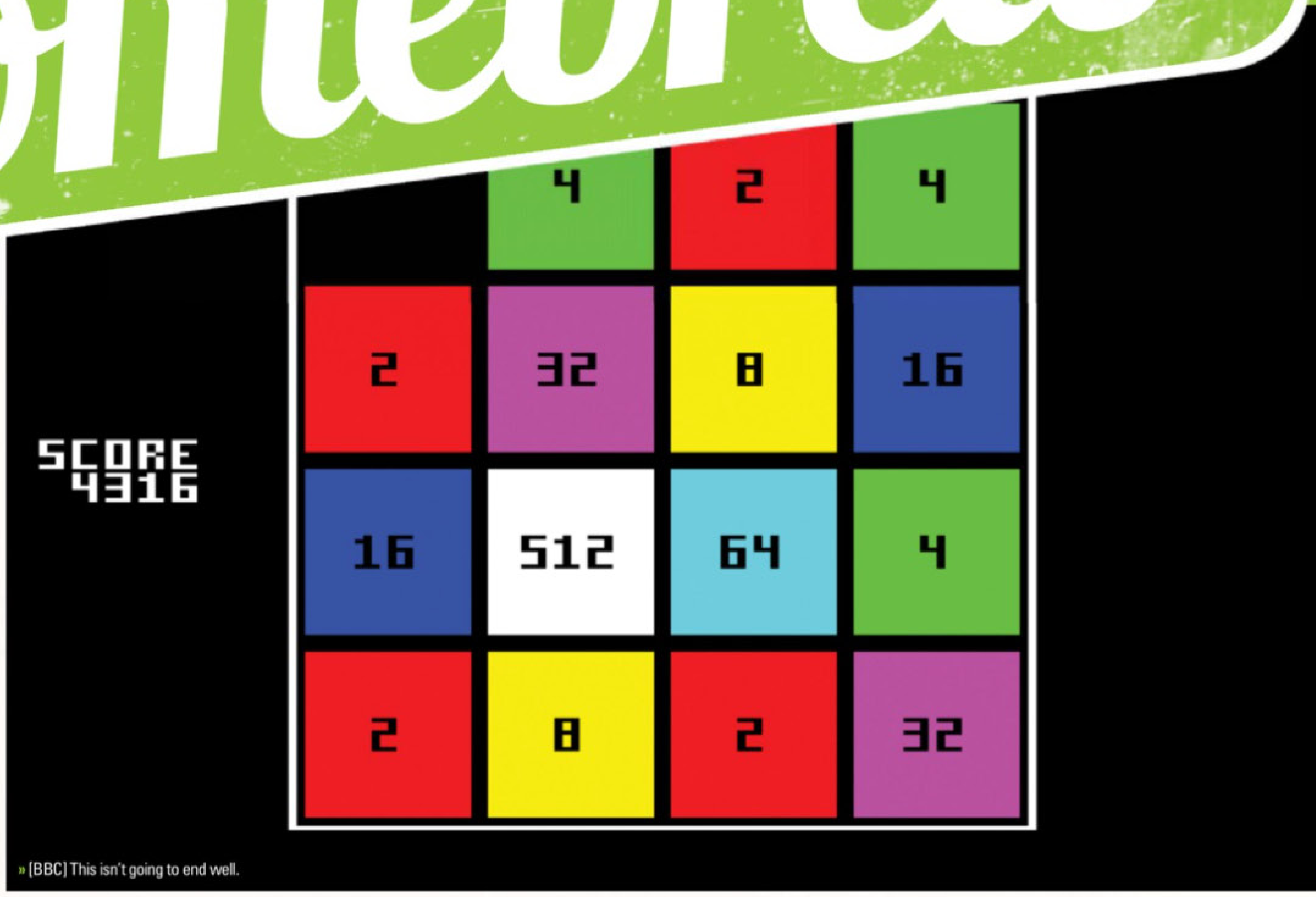
51%



Welcome to Homebrew



>> We've mentioned in the news that BASIC turned 50 at the start of May, so we'd just like to wish it a happy birthday. It might be a little clunky and Edsger Dijkstra never liked it, but dialects of BASIC were included with most Eighties home computers and it became the gateway to programming for many people



» [BBC] This isn't going to end well.

BY THE POWER OF TWO!

Diving into the latest homebrew trend

The current 'in' thing for homebrew coders appears to be demaking the puzzle game *2048* which has a 4x4 cell grid and challenges players to push numbered tiles around so that pairs with the same value merge and become a single tile with double the previous number on it. The objective is to reach the titular value of 2,048, a new low value tile is added with each move and the game is over if the entire grid is filled with tiles and no more moves can be made.

We've previously mentioned a couple of Master System versions and reviewed the one released for the Mega Drive in issue 129, but since then there's been half a dozen more produced for the Texas TI-99, C64, C16 and Atari 2600 and we can no doubt expect even more iterations to pop up well before this issue goes to print. So, as we did with *Flappy Bird* last issue when the number of conversions started getting worryingly large, we've compiled a format-ordered list for *2048* behind Kikstart.eu/2048-index which contains links to all of the versions we're aware of.

These versions all play similarly, but one version that stood out from the rest for us was the BBC Micro port which was developed in a mixture of BASIC and assembly language and released during a blog post written to celebrate the 50th birthday of the BASIC programming language on 1 May, the day in 1964 when Professor John Kemeny ran the first ever BASIC program on a timesharing terminal at Dartmouth college in New Hampshire. The post appeared at RaspberryPi.org which is the website of the Raspberry Pi foundation because the author of the game was none other than Eben Upton, who was heavily involved with the foundation and the Pi's development.

> "The one version that stood out from the rest was the BBC Micro port"

Incoming

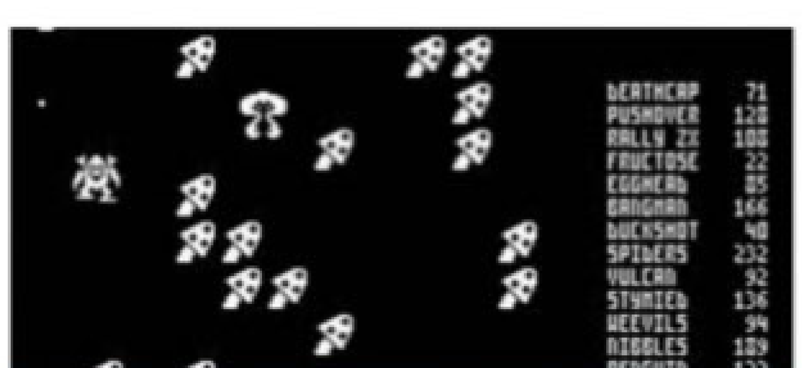
After many years, we get a look at Jonathan Cauldwell's sequel to his superb GameX

KIKSTART.EU/JETPAC-CPC



▲ CPC fans can now enjoy the delights of *Jetpac* on their favourite computer, courtesy of the Jetpac Emulator!

▼ The sequel to Jonathan Cauldwell's excellent *GameX* is well under way and we've already played a preview.



KIKSTART.EU/GAMEX-2-PRV-SPEC

KIKSTART.EU/KIKSTART.EU/NES-DEV-2014



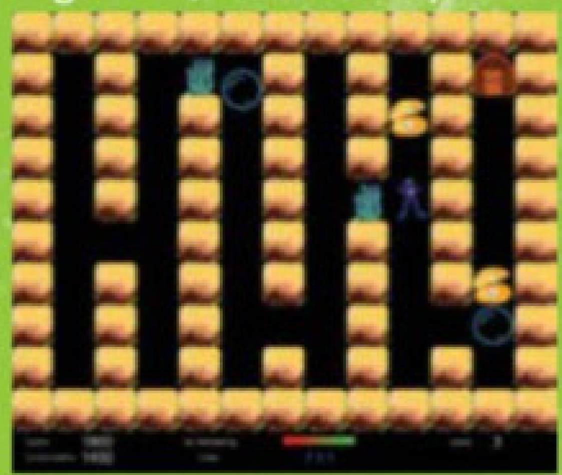
▲ The NES Coding Competition recently finished, bringing us new games including platformer *Love Story*.

NEW GAMES NEEDED

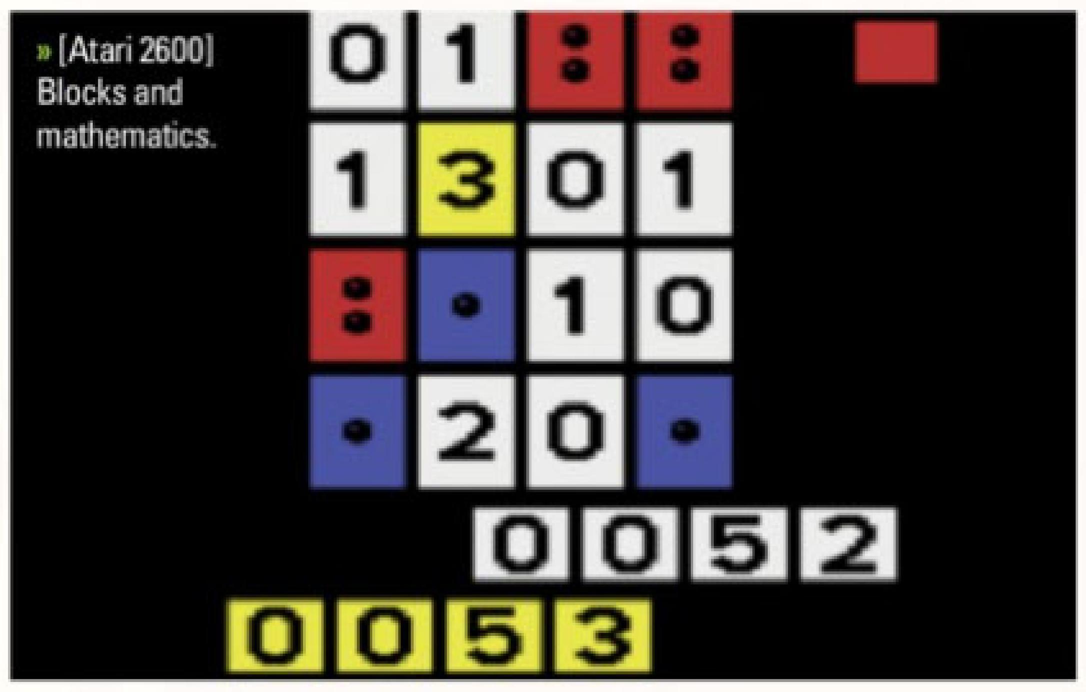
If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

ANOTHER 48 HOURS

It's that time again so another Ludum Dare game competition has taken place, this time producing just shy of 2,500 games of which three fifths came from the 48-hour competition. The theme selected for this 29th outing was 'below the surface' and as always the programmers were left to decide how they wanted to interpret it. Kikstart.eu/ludum-dare-29 for the games, and for any coders reading have a peek at the keynote video from Eniko for her take on why you should consider taking part next time at Kikstart.euk/ludum-dare-29-keynote.



» [Windows] Glub, glub.



» [Atari 2600] Blocks and mathematics.

THE MAGIC NUMBER

Continuing the number-based puzzling, *Three.s* is a new game from Thomas Jentzsch, a variation on the game *Threes* which is also the inspiration for *2048* and *1024*, the latter of which we've yet to see appear on a classic machine. The tiles move differently and some of the other rules have been tweaked, but there's a blog post behind Kikstart.eu/threes-2600 that explains how everything works. Our more technically-inclined readers should also find the description of how the game was actually made to work interesting too.

▼ *Tales Of Gorluth* is a new Amiga RPG in either English or German, pre-order now: www.talesofgorluth.de



WWW.TALESOFGORLUTH.DE

Homebrew heroes

Brian Lewis is one of that rare breed – the ZX81 programmer. His Hires series of games caught our attention so we asked him for a chat about the latest, Hires Pac-Man



Pac-Man is a classic, but what made you want to try it on the Sinclair ZX81?
Hi, before I answer that can I just say thank you for asking me to do this interview. I'm a big fan of **Retro Gamer** and especially the homebrew section, so the request to do this came as a very pleasant surprise.

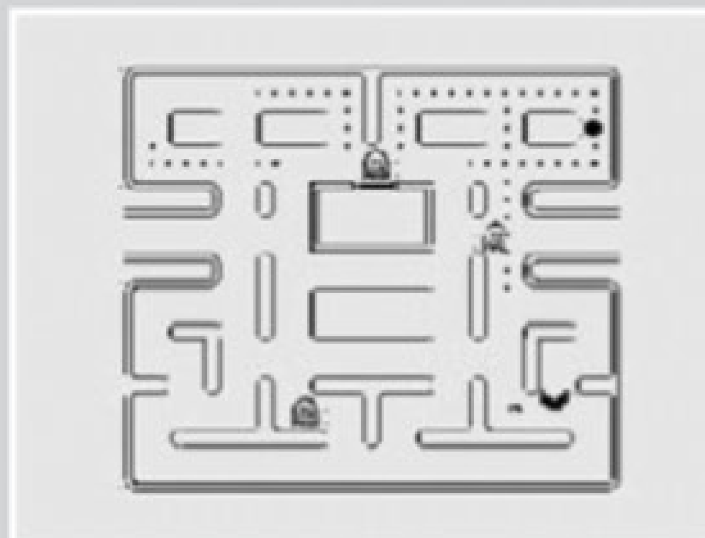
Right, back to *Pac-Man*, which all happened largely by accident to be honest. A couple of years ago I bought a ZX81 on a whim, with the idea of just messing around with it and possibly writing a few games. Then, I got completely hooked and ended up writing a high-resolution version of *Space Invaders* for it. Once that was finished, I wanted the next game to be in a similar vein but a little bit more complex.

Did using the high resolution make it more difficult?
I'd already done a lot of the 'Hires legwork' for *Space Invaders*, so I reused the code and tools from that. *Pac-Man* was written in my spare time in about three months, for *Space Invaders* I was starting from scratch and that took closer to a year.

However, yes – writing the game in hires on the ZX81 did throw up a few interesting challenges. One of the more obvious problems is just the sheer amount of data you're asking the poor old ZX81 to move around. As a result, I'd say that almost a quarter of the development time was spent optimising the code and it also forced the use of (some fairly crude) compression to squeeze everything into 16K.

The ghost movement is close to the original game, how was this achieved?
I am so glad you asked me that! Once the groundwork had been done and it seemed fairly certain that *Hires Pac-Man* was going to work; decent ghost movement quickly became the main aim of the project.

The weak point of most conversions of the time was almost always the ghosts. So I wanted to write a version for the ZX81 that played at least somewhat like the arcade original. Whilst writing the game I came across Jamey Pittman's 'Pac-Man Dossier' – Kikstart.eu/pac-man-dossier – it's a fascinating read and I tried to implement at least some of the main concepts from it on the ZX81.



» [ZX81] Snack time!

Have you had feedback from die-hard Pac-Man fans?
The feedback I've had has been very positive, mostly compliments around the speed of the game and also the 'intelligence' of the ghosts.

However, it did spark an interesting debate with an old friend of mine who was an avid *Pac-Man* player. He was certain that once they had 'seen you' in the maze they would start relentlessly heading towards you. One evening, he played my version and congratulated me on implementing a close approximation of the 'line of sight' algorithm – despite my repeated protestations that the ghosts in *Pac-Man* never actually worked like that.

And finally, are there any other classic games about to get the *Hires* treatment?
Honestly? I don't know, I mean I'll certainly continue to develop on the ZX81. It has such severe limitations that when you manage to squeeze something unexpected out of it it's an absolute joy.

I have a list of candidates for the next game, which in truth is really just a list of my personal favourites from the classics. The list covers a fair bit of ground, from a (later to be well known) plumber sorting out a damsel-bothering gorilla all the way up to outlined tanks battling each other within a zone. I have no idea which games on the list are going to be feasible, but it's going to be fun finding out…



» [ZX81] Testing, testing… 1, 2, 3.

THE WORLD'S HARDEST GAME

» **FORMAT:** ZX SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** DEBRIS » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/HARDEST-GAME-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

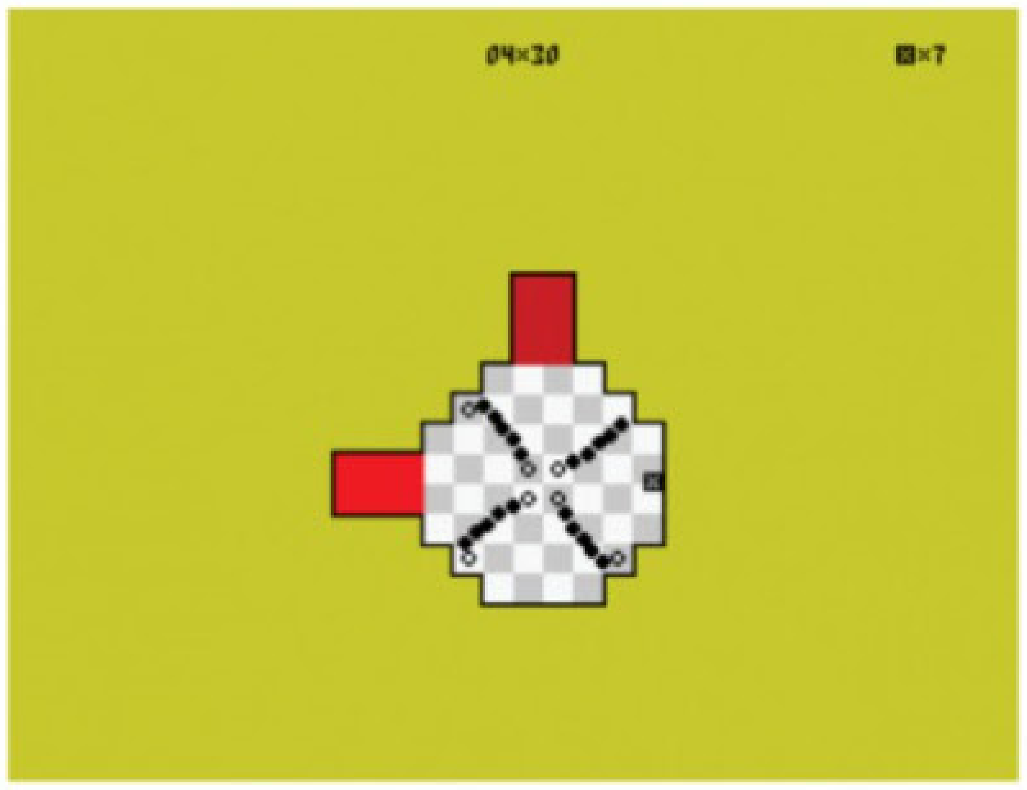
Last month we took a look at *The Impossible Game* on the C64 and now it's the Spectrum's turn at hyperbolic game titles with *The World's Hardest Game*, a conversion of the browser-based action puzzler of the same name that was originally released in late 2007. The objective is simply to guide a block with a cross on it through maze-like levels to reach the exit, grabbing all of the rings and avoiding the fast-moving spherical enemies along the way. And while that task might sound simple it certainly isn't easy, so actually reaching the goal on each stage is going to be challenging. Colliding with the moving or static enemies will immediately send the player either back to the start of a stage or at least to the most recently visited checkpoint if there is one.

And dying will happen regularly – the game sports pixel-perfect collisions and even the earliest of the 30 levels has been deviously designed so that enemies always seem to be positioned where they'll get in the way. Fortunately death isn't the handicap it used to be, so the game merely keeps a count of how many hundreds of times the player's box has shuffled of this mortal coil and there's no timer ticking away to force players into making stupid mistakes either.

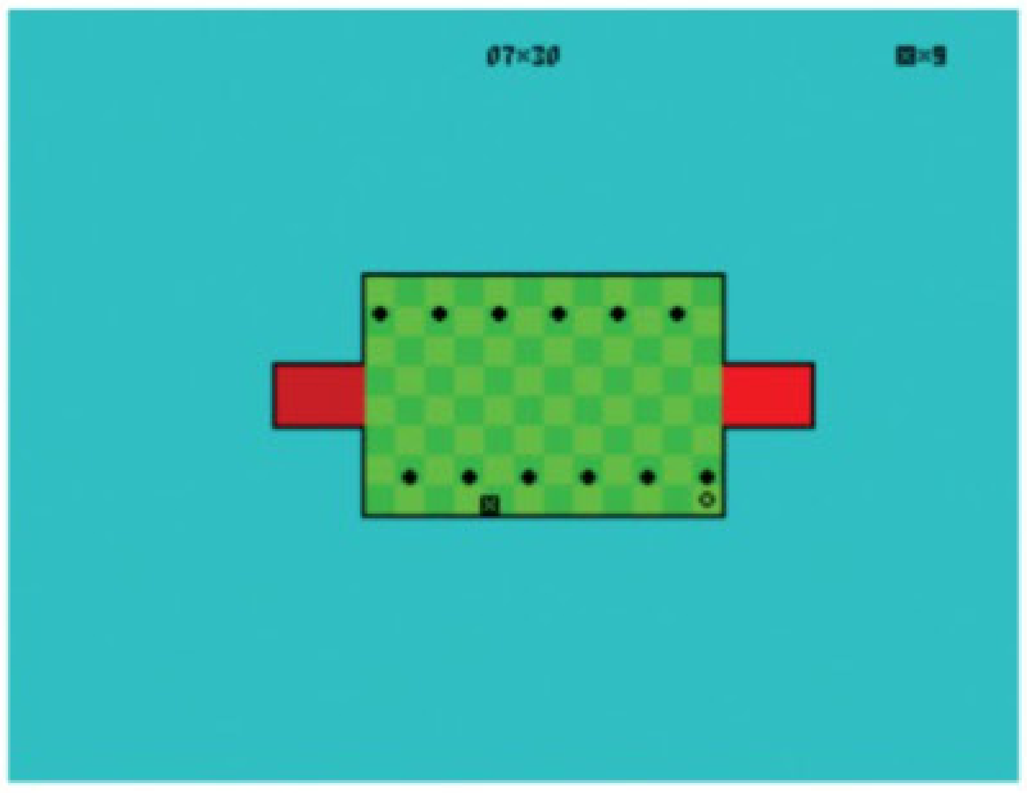
Calling it *The World's Hardest Game* might be overselling the difficulty a little – the Spectrum version actually feels just a little bit easier than the original and we've played more difficult games in the past – but it's certainly a challenging game. There isn't anything going on that could be called spectacular in either the audio or visual departments – although getting the enemies moving on the busier levels is a technically impressive feat – but the same is true of the original and the gameplay was always the primary focus. We can't recommend this game to everybody reading because there are bound to be readers with high blood pressure, but those without medical conditions who aren't going to throw their Spectrum at the wall in frustration should at least give this one a go.

" Even the earliest of the 30 levels has been designed so that enemies are always positioned where they'll get in the way "

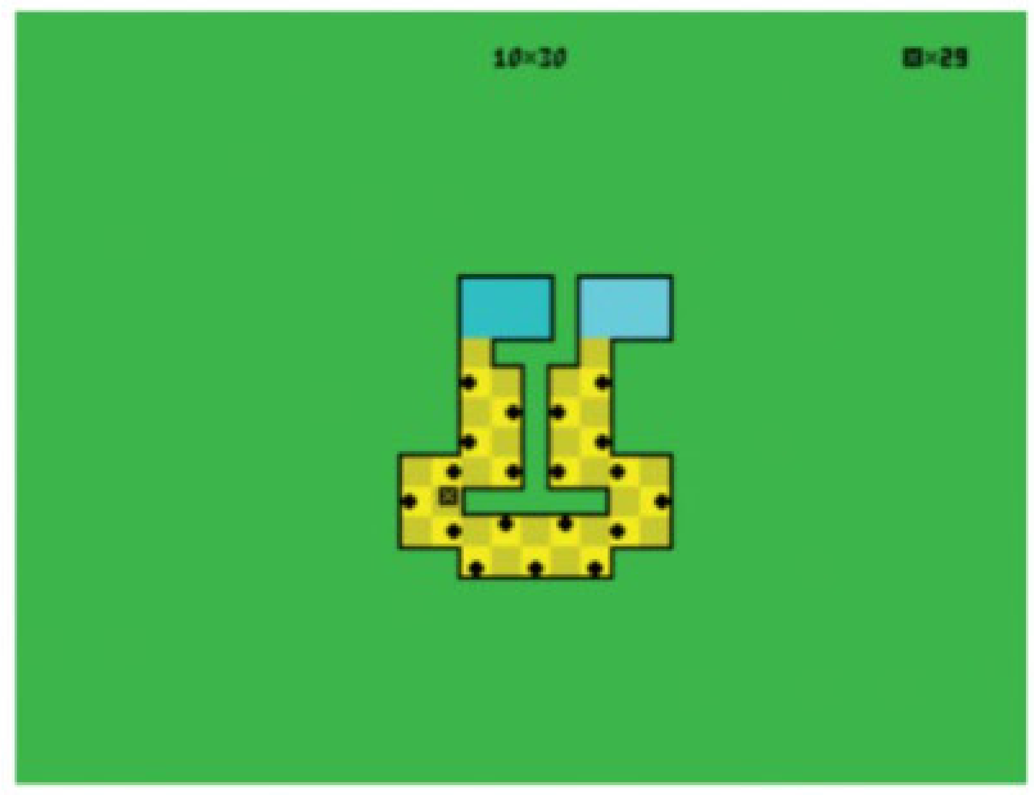
84%



» [Spectrum] Round and round she goes.



» [Spectrum] No room for error.



» [Spectrum] No rest for the wicked.

Make this

One problem that programmers come across with hardware sprites is that there's a limit to how many they can use…

NEW

1 The simplest way to recycle sprites is to split them into 'zones'; objects exist in each of these delineated areas and although they might have a little vertical motion it's usually very limited. Here's a screenshot from the Atari 8-bit game *Humanoid*, developed by Sonix Software.

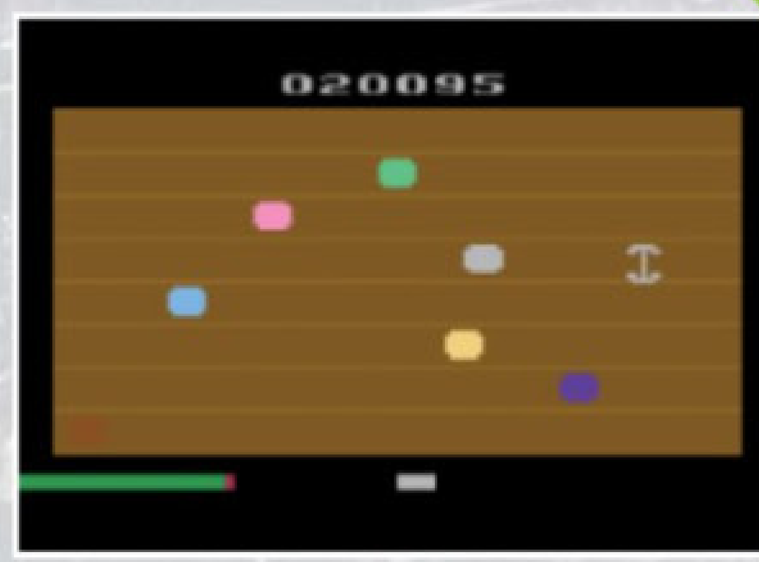




2 And here's the same screenshot but with just the enemy objects; three-colour 8-pixel wide objects like these take two hardware sprites and the same two are being repositioned after each object is drawn to produce up to seven enemies.

3 The same trick works elsewhere, here's *Danger Zone* by the Harlow Cracking Service which reuses one of the C64's eight sprites to produce the seven asteroids, leaving another seven sprites for the enemies, player and bullet. Again, the sprite movement is limited by the sprite reuse.





4 This is a common technique on the Atari 2600 with games like Jo Grand's *Ultra SCSIcide* getting up to nine moving objects out of just one of the 2600's hardware sprites – the changing of position happens around where the horizontal lines are.



» [C64] Towering over your head.

COSMOS

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** JONAS AND PATRIC HULTÉN
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/COSMOS-C64 » **PRICE:** FREE

***Cosmos* was originally** released as a coin-op in the early Eighties by Century Electronics and, although it does resemble other gallery shoot-'em-ups from that era, wading in with all guns blazing is guaranteed to end badly since the laser has a temperature gauge and temporarily shuts down if overheating. That forces the pilot to pick their shots more carefully, but taking too much time will also cause problems since the fuel will run out unless it's topped up by shooting bonus items in the asteroid storms or by safely completing the docking sequences that occasionally appear.

This C64 conversion by the Hultén Brothers is very solid and although it deliberately isn't taking full advantage of the machine's capabilities – graphics are simple and the sound would be remarkably sparse without the sampled speech alerts for fuel and temperature – it offers a decent quantity of surprisingly thought-provoking space blasting.

82%

BERTIE THE BALL

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE VIC-20 » **DEVELOPER:** MIKA 'MISFIT' KERANEN
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BERTIE-VIC » **PRICE:** FREE

Our first impressions when starting *Bertie The Ball* were reasonably positive; the titular spheroid appeared bouncing happily on one side of the screen and just a little experimentation got him moving; the joystick only responded to when Bertie is in contact with something, so pushing left or right to manoeuvre horizontally and up or down to vary the jump height only have an effect at the start of a bounce.


» [VIC-20] I'd think that I was dreaming.

And that's where we started having problems; Bertie's constant bouncing makes him hard to manoeuvre and the way that he rebounds off the landscape and enemies adds to that difficulty considerably to the point where we didn't really feel in control of the sprite. That's a shame because, as it stands, the sheer frustration of that control system is likely to scare off a lot of potential players to leave just the more masochistic gamers swearing at their computers.

51%

LOVE STORY

» **FORMAT:** NES » **DEVELOPER:** TOM LIVAK » **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/LOVE-STORY-NES » **PRICE:** FREE

It's a story as old as time; girl and boy meet, girl and boy fall madly in love, one is kidnapped by a winged demon and taken to the fiery pits of the underworld while the other dives in to get their beloved back! Our hero or heroine journeys through a series of horizontally-scrolling caves containing evil creatures such as giant snails and wasps that must be either vanquished or avoided.

Love Story isn't a massive game and saving the guy or girl from peril should prove easy for most gamers, but the levels are built from a series of pre-defined caves which are selected randomly when a level begins so no two games will be the same and it scores some extra points for that.

75%


» [NES] Have at thee sire.

FLOODIT

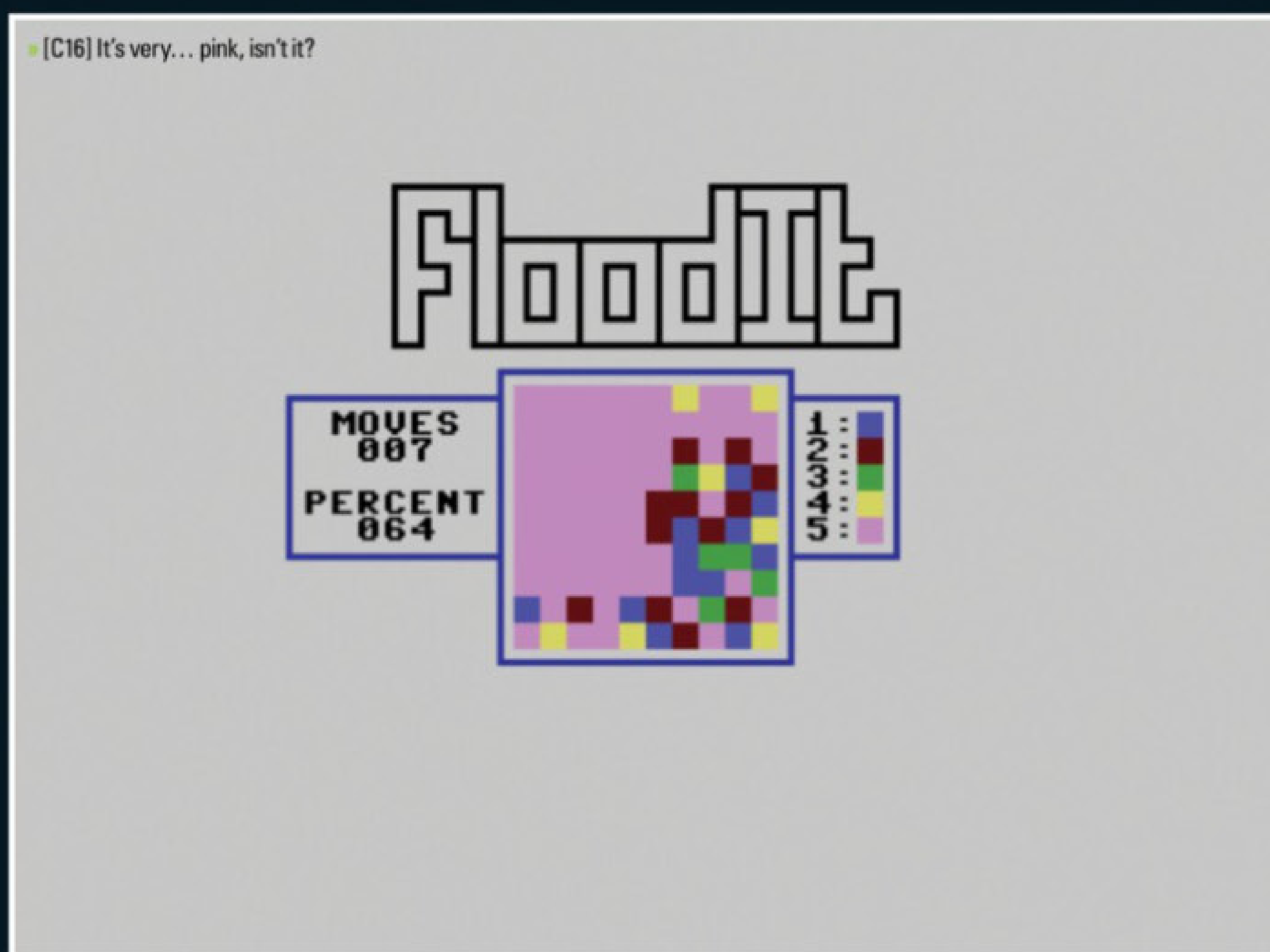
» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 16 » **DEVELOPER:** CSABA PANKACZY
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/FLOODIT-264 » **PRICE:** FREE

***FloodIt* is one** of those simple-looking puzzle games that turn out to be incredibly fiendish. The playfield must be filled with a single colour, starting with the cell at the top left corner of the playfield and radiating out to change any adjacent tiles of the same colour until a differently coloured barrier is encountered.

The challenge lies in completely replacing all of the multicoloured squares with a single colour in as few moves as possible and, since the number of moves dished out for each level doesn't leave much room for mistakes, it can take a lot of planning as well as some trial and error experimentation to get the coveted 100 per cent completion statistic.

There are 16 puzzles included which can be selected at will from the menu and the option of competing against a random level generator, so *FloodIt* should keep puzzle lovers busy for quite a while.

83%



» [C16] It's very… pink, isn't it?

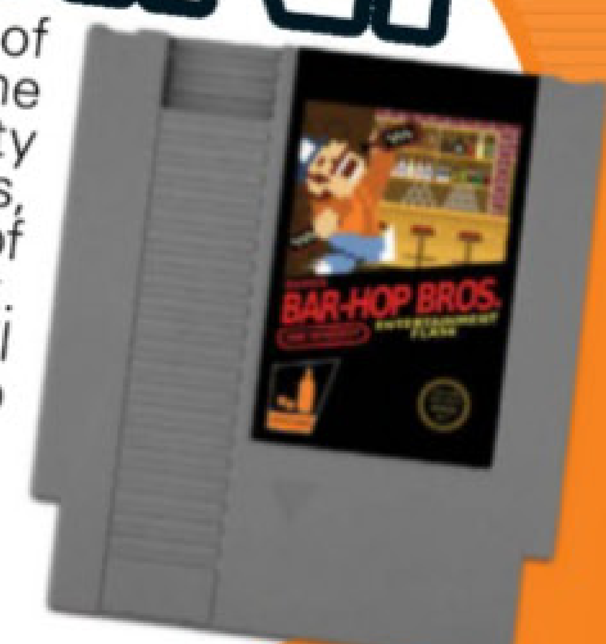
> "It can take a lot of planning as well as some trial and error"

MAILBAG

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AN AXE TO GRIND

Hi **RG,**
Loved the *Golden Axe* article in issue 128 but I would just like to step in and defend Sega on the subject of the PlayStation 2 remake. While I agree with your assessment of this ugly 3D re-imagining being generally a bit pants, it was actually developed by D3 Publisher (of Japanese budget gaming fame). It does have amazing orchestral music though which is a shame when the game itself is pretty woeful.

I'm still waiting for the day that Sega re-release the awesome *Revenge Of Death Adder* on PSN/XBLA but knowing them, they've probably lost the source code!

Richard Moore

You're correct about the involvement of D3 Publisher, but Sega still cops some of the blame – 3D-Ages was a developer set up between Sega and D3 Publisher as a collaborative effort. A little quality control certainly wouldn't have gone amiss, given that it retailed for about £12.50 as a standalone product! Incidentally, *Golden Axe* wasn't the only game in that line with excellent music – *Space Harrier* boasts a great remixed soundtrack too.



» [PS2] Like *Golden Axe*, *Space Harrier*'s PS2 remake has an excellent soundtrack.

BABY UNIVERSE

Dear **Retro Gamer**!
Firstly, I'm a massive fan of the magazine and look forward to its arrival every month, in a similar way to when the SNES/PlayStation magazines used to arrive and my brothers and I would read every word.

I am writing today having found myself in the interesting situation of paternity leave. Unlike a holiday, it's thrust on you and you can't prepare anything for the month surrounding the birth. This is our third baby so I am prepared for the late nights! I have rediscovered the delights of handheld gaming with its pick-up/put-down availability. My favourite game at 3am is *Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation* on the PlayStation. Brilliant originally, especially on link mode, but now on my PSP it's a new experience. Three-hour skirmish matches sliced up over two days!

Also, before the baby arrived I managed to convince my wife we needed a DVD player in our bedroom and managed to get a slim PS2 without her realising (or caring possibly). Now my three-year-old is mastering *Sonic Mega Collection* and I feel like I'm passing on my gaming heritage to the next generation!

Many thanks again for a great mag, this has not been easy to type with a baby in my arms!



» [Master System] *Sonic Chaos* is a good game to start younger gamers off with.

Peter White

Congratulations on your new arrival! Members of the team with kids of their own have swapped stories of playing games while being slept on by their little ones, so you're certainly not alone there. *Sonic* seems to be a good one to start kids on, too – though these days, they're more likely to grab your phone for a quick game than take hold of a Mega Drive pad.

STAR LETTER
CHEAT TO WIN



» Special thanks to Atari Mania (www.atarimania.com) for providing this image of the PGP-1.

Hi there **Retro Gamer,**
In issue 128 in your article 'The Rise And Fall Of Cheats' you mentioned that while Commodore 64 had Action Replay, console owners had no such cheating device. This information is wrong, because there was a cheat cartridge available for the Atari VCS 2600 system. It was called Personal Game Programmer PGP-1 and was available from Answer Software in the USA in 1983. You could say it was the world's first cheat cartridge for a home console. I owned this device and managed to alter many VCS games with infinite lives and disable collision detection and more. It even let me input my own name and other neat little tricks.

Shame you didn't manage to include this clever little device in your article, but I also noticed that the article was very UK-centric. In 'A Short History Of Playing Tips' you omitted the *Player's Strategy Guide To Atari VCS Home Video Games* book from the makers of *Electronic Games*. In 1982 this book was a best-seller in the USA. Ken Uston, a popular US Blackjack player, also wrote many strategy and tips books.

Thanks for listening, and greetings to the old country.

Marco Greatly Jr

Thanks for the letter, Marco. The box out on Playing Tips was specifically about the section within *Crash*, which is why the other publications you note weren't mentioned, but you're certainly right to note their importance – we did note them early on, but felt that guides were generally more of a 'soft' form of cheating.

You've shown us up a bit with the PGP-1 though, that's a particularly obscure device right there! Our research seems to show that it was never properly released, and that only a few prototype units are left in existence. Enjoy your prize!

BOMB SACK

Dear **RG,**
If I get sacked today, it's your fault for publishing the *Bomb Jack* article! Once I read that I could play it on the *Tecmo Classic Arcade* collection for Xbox, I went straight on eBay and bought it.

It turned up yesterday and, whilst I am working from home today, I've just switched it on, just to make sure it



» [Arcade] We've seen lots of love for *Star Force* from readers recently.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

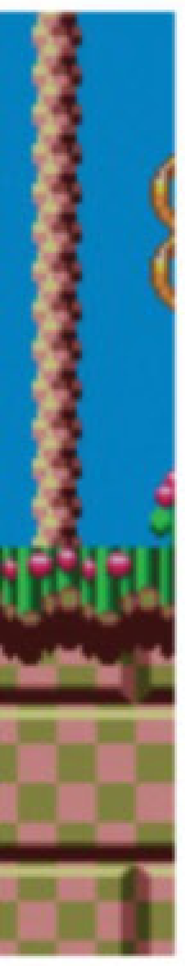
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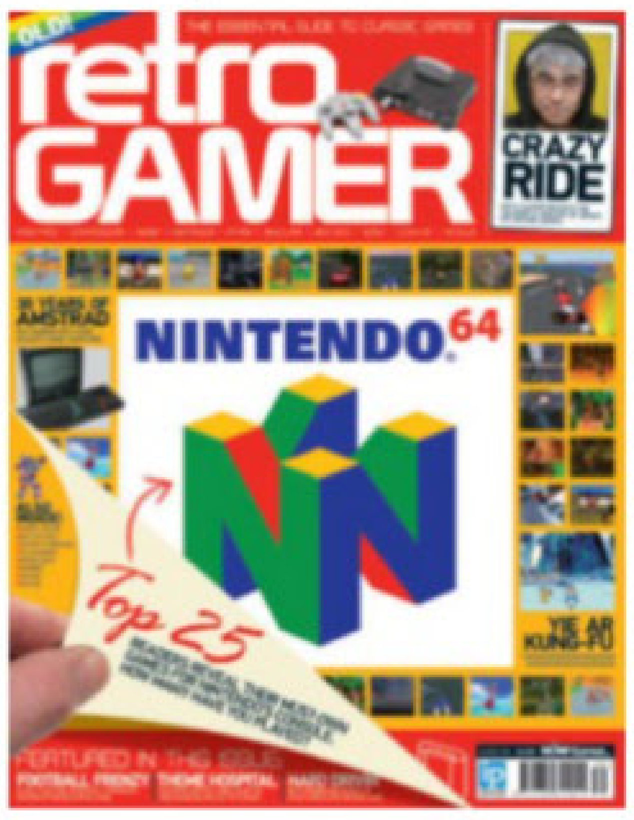
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THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY…

Darran discusses the covers that didn't quite make it





CRAZY TAXI

We tried using a screenshot for the Crazy Taxi cover, but it just wasn't working (Dreamcast game's aren't always the prettiest blown up). We liked the idea of incorporating Kenji Kanno's face into the iconic logo, but it ended up looking like a modern videogame magazine.

NINTENDO 64

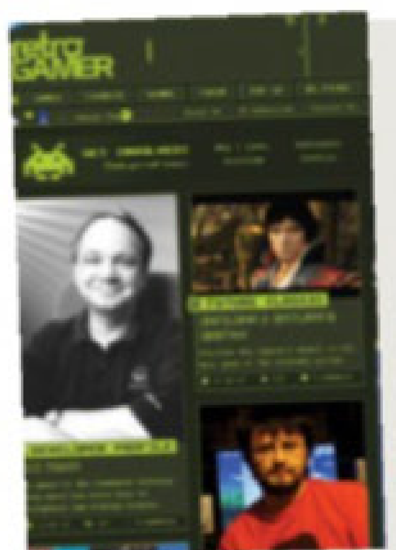
We've already ran a superb N64 cover, so a hardware cover was out of the question. We tried a couple of options, but our favourite was this which riffed off the design of the box art. Ultimately it just didn't look as classy as our previous effort.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Sticker Books

After Jon suggested a sticker book design for this month's football feature, they've become all the rage in the office. Steve and editor in chief Ryan have been fervently trading World Cup stickers in an attempt to complete their albums, while Darran's taken an alternative path by collecting animal stickers.





From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Your favourite Amstrad CPC game

WoodyCG
Harrier Attack – by far the best of the bundled games. Hours spent dodging flak, duelling with fighters, bombing buildings, bombing ships and then landing back on the aircraft carrier in time for tea and biscuits.

ArchaicKoala
Oh Mummy – my cousin had a CPC and this was the first game I ever played on it. A fun little maze game but I didn't like the green display!

Matt_B
I'll go for *Driller*. It's one of the most incredible games to hit the 8-bits in general, with its 3D environments and intricate puzzles, but the Amstrad version was a little bit special thanks to the machine being able to do high resolution graphics in four colours. It's probably not everyone's cup of tea, but I had a lot of fun uncovering the game's secrets and playing it to a finish.

NorthWay
Of the ones I have played myself I'd probably go for *Ikari Warriors*. *Crafton & Xunx* is intriguing though…

The Laird
The Amstrad CPC version of *Chase HQ* is just superb, it was even better than the Speccy version!

KatzKatz
The CPC version of *Total Eclipse* is very impressive. It's probably the best version for the 8-bit machines.

Mancman
Oh my, so many. I can't mention just one! *Barbarian*. Oh my god, I just cut off his head! *Gryzor*, such an amazing conversion. I completed this so many times! *Get Dexter*, dare I say better than anything Ultimate ever published?!

loads you understand… and there's *Star Force*, a game I've completely forgotten about and used to love. *Solomon's Key* is still pretty ace too. When have I got to get that paper to my boss? I haven't even played *Bomb Jack* yet…

I urge all your readers to buy this compilation; it's one of the best out there. Also, please keep doing what you do: reminding us of these classics and alerting us to where and how we can relive them and, more importantly, share them with our kids. Two days of the Easter Holidays were spent playing *Sonic Chaos* and *World Soccer* on my Master System with my eight and six-year-olds and they loved it.

See you at the tribunal!!

Robert Leonard

We can only hope you managed to get back to work – perhaps we ought to start putting a disclaimer on the cover! Good to see more love for *Star Force*, too. It seems to be quite a popular topic in the Mailbag section lately…

RETRO GAMER VS MOTHRA

Hi **Retro Gamer,**

What with the success of the new film, have you guys thought about doing an article on *Godzilla* games? There's a fair few of them now, with the first one having come out in 1983 on the Commodore 64.

Matt Stewart

We haven't done a *Godzilla* feature yet, largely because we're still a bit upset about *Godzilla Unleashed* on the Wii. However, if you're in the mood for big monsters check out our forthcoming history of the *Rampage* series.



» [SNES] While some *Godzilla* games are kind of cool, this SNES fighter is sadly pretty pants.

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IMAGINE PUBLISHING





Four Quarters Arcade Bar

Retro Game Base has already built up a reputation for being one of the few shops in London to actively still sell classic retro items. Here, co-founder Joe Dowling tells us about its new project



» Joe Dowling is never too busy for a game of *Tron*.

Where did the idea for Four Quarters originate?
Tom and I have been looking to do a retro gaming space for several years, but settled on an arcade bar around two years ago as there were already other gaming cafes in the pipeline in London. Barcade is obviously the main influence for almost every other arcade bar and this is true for us as well.

Why create an arcade and a bar/cafe?
Besides the fact that we all love old school arcade games, there's a huge gap in the market here in London. It's proven successful around the world, but it takes specialist knowledge and contacts, which we are lucky enough to have.

What arcade games are you focusing on?
Mainly late Seventies up to mid-Nineties. We have several of the classics from the golden age such as *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids* etc, but we know a lot of our client base will be much younger so it's important to have Nineties cabs. We are desperate to get a *Turtles* machine for this very reason, not because it's a great game, but because it presses the nostalgia button, so if any of your readers have one they wish to sell they have a buyer here! We also have a beautiful original 1972 *Pong*, which is one of only a handful in the UK.

Will there be sections designed for competitive play for fighting fans?
For us to be a success it's vital that the casual and even non-gamers enjoy the space, and competitive fighters can be somewhat intimidating. For what we are going for it's not really the right vibe and Heart of Gaming caters brilliantly for this market already. That said we will have the odd tourney and will always have at least one classic fighter on.

Why did you choose Peckham as your base of operations?
Peckham has a great vibe, loads of students and so much going on, but a distinct lack of licensed venues, so it's definitely the right place for us. Originally we wanted to open up near Shoreditch but the budget for something in that area would need to be two or three times bigger.

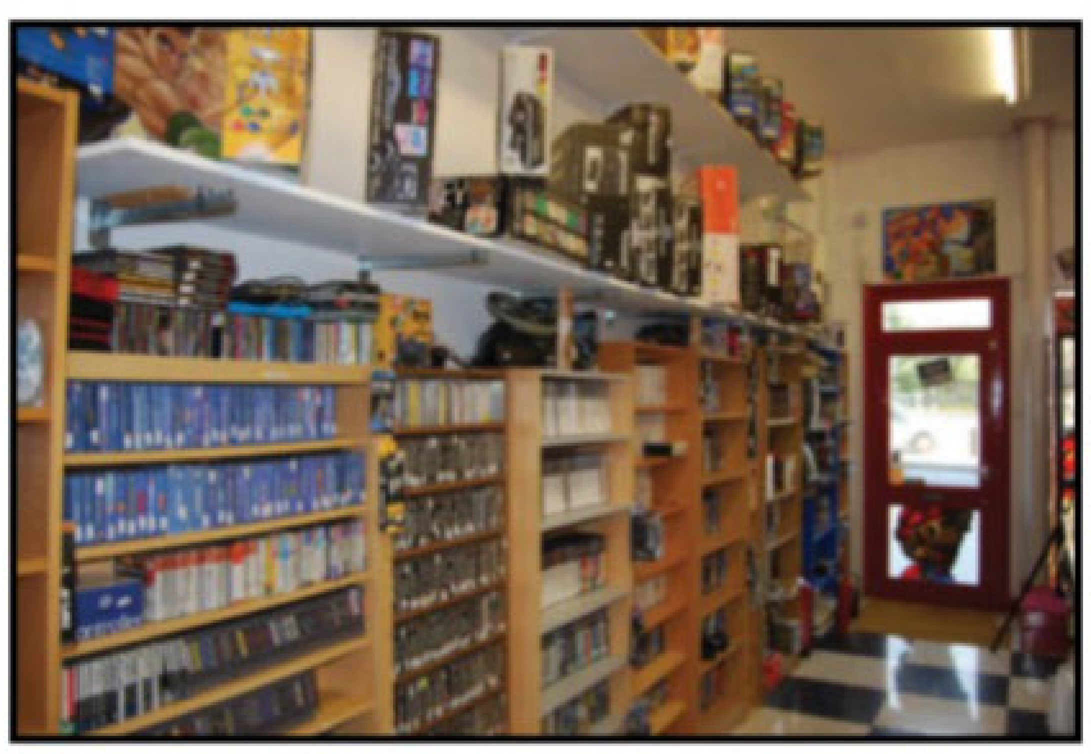
Why do you think there is a big decline in the arcade scene?
I think the reasons have been well documented – modern gaming made it almost obsolete. Why pay a quid a go for something you can replicate at home? Back in the day the distance between, say, *Operation Wolf* in the arcade and on your humble Speccy was a million miles.

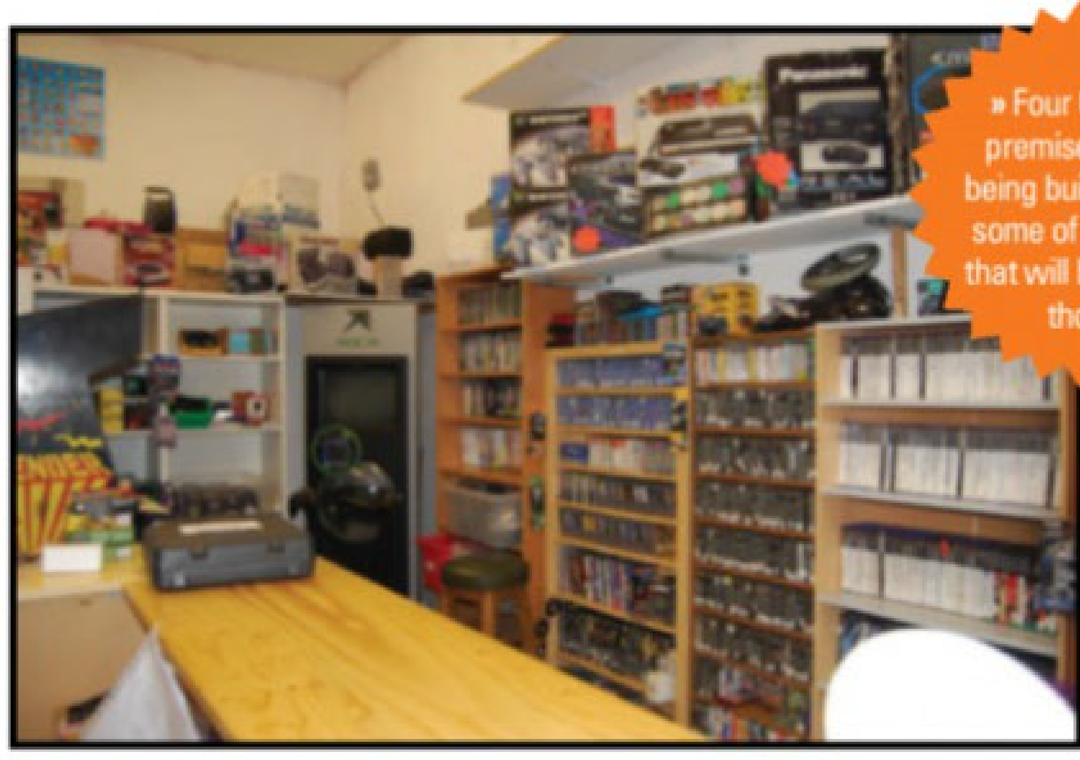
What will Four Quarters do to combat that?
All our machines are already 'obsolete', but they are all amazing fun to play. We're a bar with arcade games rather than the other way around and by keeping all the games to 25p a play (one quarter) they are not going to break the bank.

What's your favourite arcade game and why?
For me it's probably *Smash TV* or *Op Wolf*. Both are incredibly challenging coin-munchers but amazing fun. Among the other guys *R-Type* and *Moon Cresta* are two faves. *

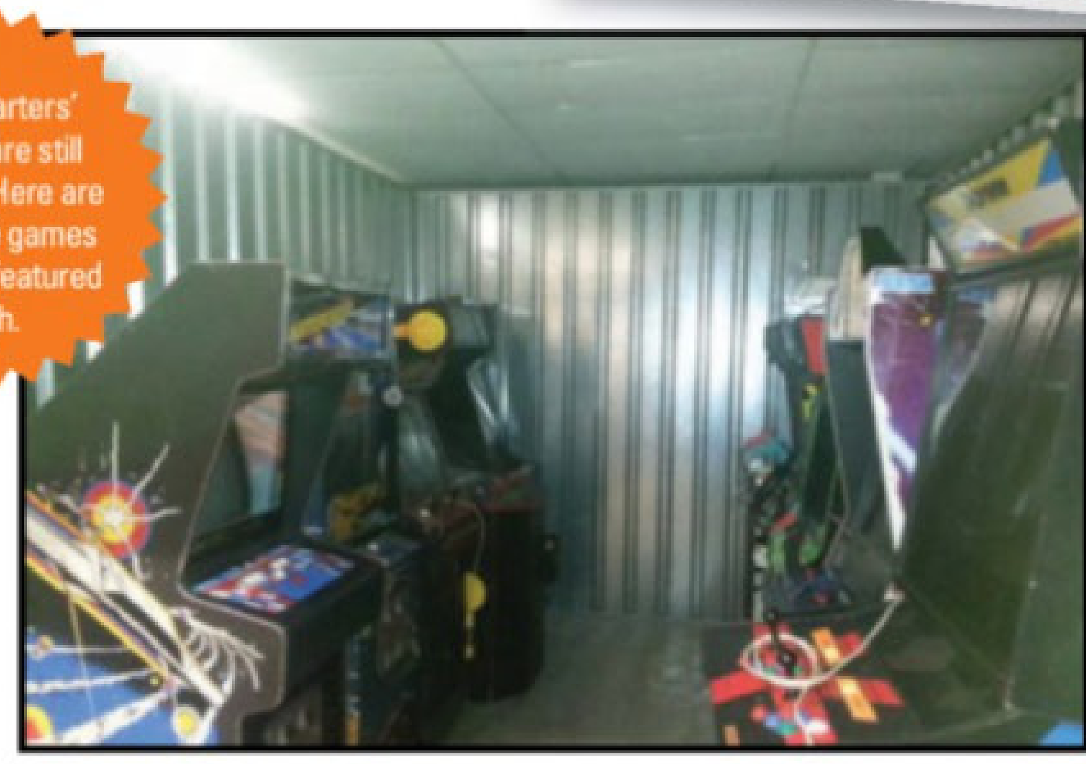
» This *Pong* machine will have pride of place once Four Quarters is up and running.







» Four Quarters' premises are still being built. Here are some of the games that will be featured though.



retro GAMER

» LOAD 131

next month

ON SALE 17 JULY 2014

ROADBLASTERS

Our next ultimate guide celebrates Atari's futuristic coin-op, and we speak to the coder behind the stunning Atari Lynx conversion



More inside

- TRS-80
- Mev Dinc
- Mario Is Missing
- Elder Scrolls series
- Super Turrican
- Marathon Men

Also in next month's issue

Rampage
■ We team up with series co-creator Brian Colin and smash and bash our way through the *Rampage* franchise

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater
■ Main programmer Mick West grabs a board and revisits the first two games in Activision's hit skateboard franchise

Tau Ceti
■ Pete Cooke explains the origins behind his epic space odyssey that blew away Spectrum owners in 1985

FMV Games
■ As news of an HD revision of *Night Trap* circulates we look back at the highs and lows of FMV games

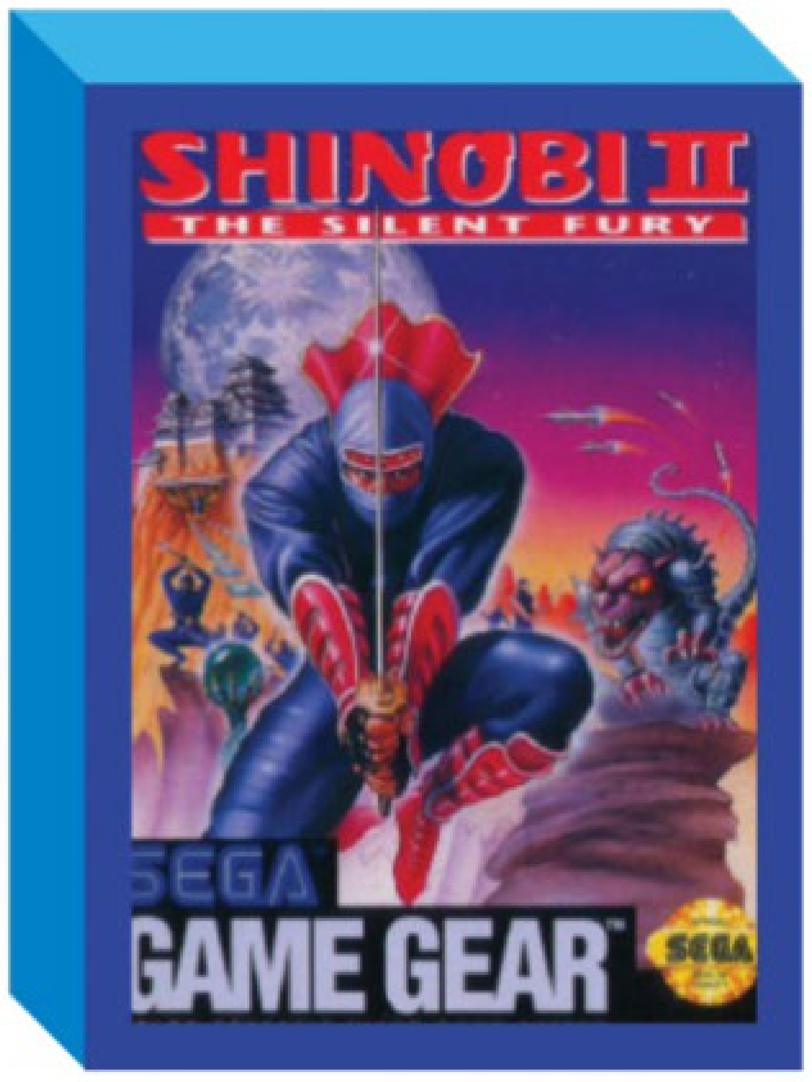

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ENDGAME



SHINOBI II: THE SILENT FURY

» Ninjas are ace. They stand around in dark places wearing dark clothes, attacking suddenly and without warning. They're a bit like combat goths. But Shinobi's ninjas aren't normal ninjas – these five assassins wear white outfits with colourful accessories. Worst yet, most of them have managed to get themselves captured, meaning that Joe Musashi must once again embark on a rescue mission…



01

» As well as rescuing his mates, Joe's been picking up some elemental crystals along the way. They're important in the same way that all mystical objects are – chaos emeralds, Triforce pieces, you know the deal. Anyway, he's got all five now.



02

» These ninjas are pretty vengeful sorts, and despite the completion of the rescue mission and the recovery of the crystals, they're not yet satisfied. So they blow up the base as revenge, nearly killing themselves in the process. Great job, lads.



03

» Having successfully stuck it to the bad guys, the five ninjas content themselves with striking a pose in an area of poor lighting. This is fine, but we reckon that the hot pink ninja's attire might still have been visible.



04

» And now, we have Joe running off into the future. But his mates have already disappeared again. He just can't take his eye off them, can he? Say what you will about Princess Peach, but she's never been much of one for combat. With this lot, it's frankly inexcusable behavior.



05

» But wait! They haven't been kidnapped again; they're just a few steps behind their more competent leader. Well, that's alright then. The five ninjas leap off into the sunset, presumably to procure some dyes for their outfits so they can find new fame as the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers.

Alternative Software Presents



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LazyGamer.net

"I have no hesitation in calling it the best cricket game yet."
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